ThingsThat Make Us Better*

Better*

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DOLCE & GABBANA



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Esquire

THE COLD OPEN

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WAITING FOR AND THE

MOMENTWE

THE ODYSSEY OF STEPHANIE LEE*

By TOM JUNOD

WT

tephanie Lee had been hospitalized since the day before Christmas Eve, 2014, at Mount Sinai, in New York. She had a room on the palliative-care floor. The doctors who cared for her were at pains to say they could make her more comfortable but they could not

treat her cancer. She was taking massive doses of powerful pain medications. She was eating much less and sleeping much more. When a doctor described his hopes for her in terms not of getting better but of simply going home to Mississippi, she was at peace both with what he said and what he didn't say.

Then, not quite a week after she was admitted, everything changed. On December 29, a scientist and the oncologist who worked with him walked into her room and announced they might have something for

her. The scientist had been working a year and a half to devise a treatment for her and for her alone—a personalized treatment for Stephanie Lee—and now, finally, his lab had seen what he called "a hit." It was an *interesting* hit, it was a *promising* hit, and he came to her room with the oncologist not only to tell her about it but also to see if she remained healthy enough, alive enough, to endure the treatment it entailed.

She was alive enough. Since her hospitalization, she had gone long stretches without speaking, long stretches when she stirred only to press a pump and give herself the medication that caused her eyes to roll back in her head. But she never lost the awareness that she had honed over a lifetime—her daunting gift for seeing people and situations plain—nor the voice that always said the right thing, the true thing, the honest thing, the thing that cut to the bone. Now she heard the scientist and the oncologist out, and, with her eyes closed

and her face turned to heaven, she spoke as if from the deepest well of exhaustion and relief and said, simply, "At last."

It was a development that, encountered in a work of fiction, would have stretched credulity. Without prelude, a deus ex machina had arrived upon the scene and the race against time had begun. As it happened, the scientist needed exactly what Stephanie had left. He needed three weeks, and so what ensued was nothing less than a trial by last hope, with every day bringing the treatment closer to fruition and Stephanie closer to the end. The cancer began helping itself to the few calories she was able to stomach, and then to everything she had. She was always so dignified in her bearing, so erect in her carriage, so put together in every way; now she lay askew in her hospital bed with the brightly colored head scarf she habitually wore toppled sideways, as if she'd gone on a bender. She could not sit up; she could not lie down; her body had accommodated her pain by settling into a permanent curve. She was a small woman of formidable presence, but the cancer had started distorting her, whittling her wrists down to filaments and inflating her legs into monumental things so swelled by fluid that they had to be moved by attendants. She suffered setback after setback and infection after infection, and yet she hung on for four more weeks in the hospital until another oncologist who worked with the scientist walked into her room and told her that the treatment was ready, if she wanted it.

If she wanted it? It was all that she had wanted for so long. And now she had only to say yes, she had only to reach for it....

And that was when she began to die.

She had contracted the gastrointestinal infection *C. difficile* early in her hospital stay. It had been treated with antibiotics and had receded, but then, as she got weaker, it came roaring back, with the advantage of being the only bacteria left in her gut. She became incontinent, and, as luck would have it, the side effect associated with the first phase of the treatment devised for her, a drug called trametinib, was incontinence. It could make her condition even worse. The treatment was ready, if she wanted it... and if she regained control of her bowels.

It seemed an impossibility, akin to asking a person experiencing an asthma attack to



Stephanie Lee in 2013, facing a terminal diagnosis. Could the most sophisticated personalized medicine save her life?

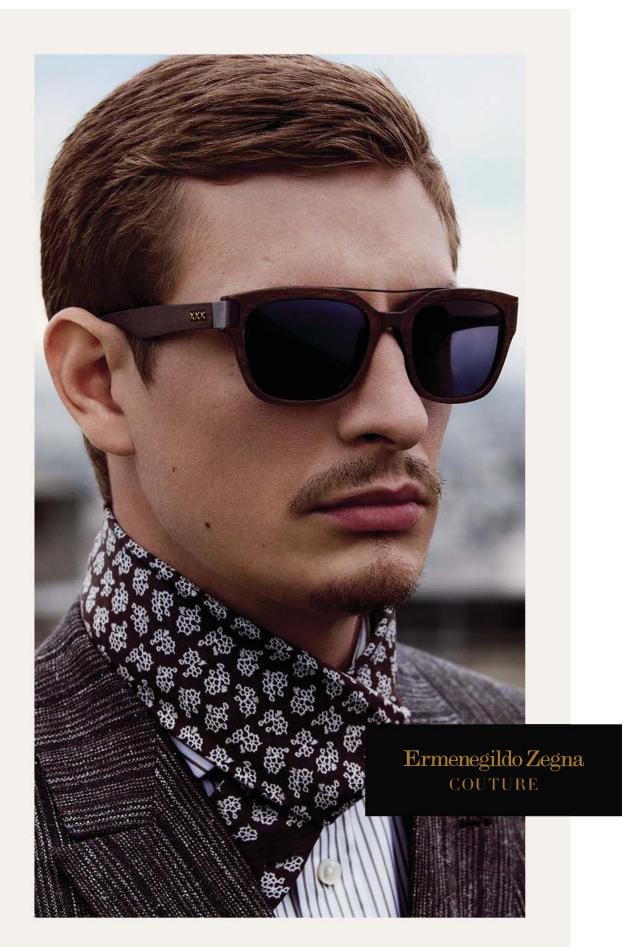
breathe normally as a condition of getting an inhaler. But then a Sinai gastroenterologist introduced himself to her, as well as his specialty: fecal transplants. His name was Ari Grinspan, and he proposed delivering healthy excrement to her G.I. tract, thereby seeding it with flora that could fight the C. difficile infection. It is a procedure that has a dramatic success rate. The problem was in the delivery. Dr. Grinspan preferred to do fecal transplants by way of a colonoscopy, but Stephanie's colon was comprehensively blocked. That left the introduction of a nasogastric tube, which he would feed into her nostrils, snake down her esophagus, and...would we step outside?

We followed him out into the hall, my colleague Mark Warren and I. We took off the gowns, masks, and gloves we had to wear in her room. We listened to Dr. Grinspan detail the risks and benefits of such a procedure, and then ask us if we wanted him to proceed.

For an instant, I thought that he had to be talking to someone standing behind us, maybe someone with medical qualifications. But no-there was no one else. He was talking to us. We had met Stephanie as journalists, then had become her friends and advocates when she got sick. We had introduced her to scientists and doctors at Sinai and had written about Sinai's effort to make her a test case for the potential of what has come to be called personalized medicine. We had tried to do nothing less than save her life, and now we stood face-to-face with the responsibility that ambition requires. The only way Stephanie Lee could get the treatment we had once written about—the treatment we'd once promised—was if we, as her health-care proxies, consented for Dr. Grinspan to push the tube up her nose and induce her to swallow it down her throat. He described himself as an aggressive doctor, a doctor who likes to err on the side of treatment. But Stephanie was so very, very sick: too sick and fogged by drugs either to give or to refuse her informed consent.

The decision was ours.

The continuation of Stephanie's story will appear in the August issue. Alternatively, you can read it at our new site featuring the most essential Esquire stories past and present, classics.esquire.com.



CALVIN HARRIS in EMPORIO ARMANI

Esquire

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You need more energy and focus. You need to read this now.

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Economy Plus. By Joe Keohane

ON THE COVER: CHARLIZE THERON PHOTOGRAPHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR ESQUIRE BY JAMES WHITE. TANK TOP BY J BRAND. PANTS BY ALL SAINTS. JEWELRY BY HOORSENBUHS. STYLING BY ROB AND MARIEL, MANICURE BY APRIL FOREMAN, BOTH FOR THE WALL GROUP. HAIR BY ENZO ANGILERI FOR CLOUTIER REMIX. MAKEUP BY PATI DUBROFF FOR FORWARD ARTISTS.



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The costar of the new Showtime series Happyish (premiering April 26) and films She's Funny That Way (out May 1). The D Train (out May 8), and Tomorrowland (out May 22) had some feelings about this issue and her rabbit, Lu



PAGE 15 The ESQ&A: **Neil deGrasse Tyson**

As a review is nothing but an opinion, and therefore just energy typed onto a computer, disappearing into nothingness... Holy shitballs! Reading this felt orgasmic in its simple truth. What a beautiful, beautiful mind. Sigh. And I love any discourse on aging and wisdom that is as

Esquire

sexy and earned as this. Required reading for all humans, please.

PAGE 88 "How Much Better Can We Stand to Be?"

Just because you can do something, people, does not mean that you should. How can a human trust another human if a machine is suggesting how to wine and dine them on a first date? Or

suggesting that the middle class, especially our artists, be destroyed? Ugh. Fuck you and your overcaffeinated, shaggy-haired, gazillionaire Frisbee-throwing. Use your genius for good!!!!!!!

PAGE 64"Denim Redefined"

What separates us from the beasts is that we can call out writers who tell us that men are the ones with the stories to tell. Especially about jeans. Sorry, dude. Women buy more denim and pay more for it hands down. This was like stepping into a Steinbeck novel-so beautiful, so dated, not my story. Although I appreciate knowing the difference between selvage and salvage. I had figured all selvage denim was just used. So thank you.

PAGE 96 "There's Somebody Ruthless on the Way"

Oh, Conor. You had me at "rear naked choke." Also the description of your "huge ass." This is what separates us from the animal kingdom. This and \$1.700 sneakers.

PAGE 44

My husband, my two kids, and I have a rabbit. It makes me sad thinking of my little horny caramel-colored Lu sitting in his cage with no one to bone. Because if some people "do it like rabbits," they don't know Lu. Poor Lu. Everyone is having more sex than you. You have never had sex. I don't know how or even if you feel about it, because you are a beast and my wearing jeans separates us.

AND NOW A POEM . . .

Found between the lines of this issue

He strips down to his underwear and jumps on you from behind. Page 99 "Scott, this is Vinnie, our teacher." 82 His eyes, which are almost gray, crinkle sweetly when he smiles. 73 And you don't want one of those. 44 He's kicking himself now. 92 "You have good hair," he says. 26 "Do you kill bugs?" 20

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Are We Getting Better?

A question has dogged me since we started thinking about this issue, and then as we assigned stories for it, and then as those stories came in and we all began to read them, trying to determine how they might fit together as an issue: Are we, as a culture, getting better? It's a central tenet of the American faith that all new technological developments-whether it was the industrial revolution or the digital revolution or all the tiny minor changes that occur all the time—are improvements. That we are indeed, by virtue of creative and economic and scientific achievement, becoming better.

There are a few things that cause me to question this.

The first is my growing acceptance of the notion that nothing, essentially, ever really changes. I remember the first time I was exposed to this idea. Chuck Klosterman, who wrote a column for Esquire a few years ago, had been teaching in Germany for four months or so. We had lunch after he returned, and he told me he'd been surprised that in the time he'd been away-despite the clichés about the ephemeral nature of what's in the news or obsessing the culture—nothing had changed. Things happened, I remember him saying, but nothing had actually changed.

I think one can see evidence of this most clearly in some of the social issues that roil our culture. It's not without some kind of bitter poignancy that the recent killings and consequent unrest in

Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, New York, and Cleveland and around the country happened in the lead-up to the 50th anniversary of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama. I was talking to Tom Chiarella a few months ago, and he told me about seeing an eightyear-old walk into a room where the TV was playing the trailer to the movie Selma and hearing her say, "Is that Ferguson?"

So in this issue, we're poking at the idea of things always getting Better. There are unquestionably tools and insights and forms of behavior that can help us get through our lives in a more streamlined and enjoyable and enriching fashion. And there are also developments—in medicine and especially the coming torrent of capability unleashed by artificial intelligence-whose benefits are dubious or will even hurt entire segments of society and exacerbate the socioeconomic divide that is already undermining American culture. Better is a word of which I've learned to be skeptical.

Idon't know that this is going to make anyone's life better, but we've spent a good deal of time over the last 18 months developing our own version of something new. No, it's not another television network. It's a premade cocktail. A couple years ago, former articles editor Ryan D'Agostino was drinking with Trey Zoeller, who runs Jefferson's Bourbon, and they started talking about creating an Esquire manhattan.

Well, we've done it. D'Agostino has since gone off to run Popular Mechanics, but a few colleagues and I have painstakingly tested formula after formula to find the three we deemed worthy of having Trey barrel and age.

The winning formula resulted in a damn good cocktail. And a fine alternative to hying yourself to a first-rate bar or mixing your own at home. And it's another way to add a little Esquire to your life. It will be available in select retailers any day now.



A few of the dozens of test bottles we were forced to drink and an early prototype of the "Esquire manhattan" bottle.

DAVID GRANGER

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Esquire

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Man at His Best

The ESQ&A

Astrophysicist, talk-show host, and unlikely pop-culture icon **NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON** talks to **SCOTT RAAB** about stardust, science groupies, politics, and the tragedy of Pluto



SCOTT RAAB: Congratulations on the National Academy of Sciences award.

NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON: Oh! I didn't realize how loudly it got announced.

SR: If I found out about it, it must have been loud.
NDT: Part of me just wants

to stay home and keep working rather than collecting an award.

SR: Not a bad thing to be given an award for spreading knowledge, considering the strain of anti-intellectualism in American culture.

NDT: I don't think of what I do as spreading knowledge. The phrase "You're lecturing me" is never a compliment. So I realized that's not what I should be doing if I have any interest in compelling people to become scientifically literate.

SR: What's your secret? NDT: I've found that no one complains about pop culture being a source of someone lecturing to them. If someone's telling you about Kim Kardashian, you're not going to accuse them of lecturing to you. If I can explore an intersection between pop culture and science literacy, then it generally will not come across as a lecture. You're surfing a wave already created by a pop-culture force. During the Super Bowl, one of my tweets was "A 50-yard field goal, in the University of Phoenix Stadium, deflects about one-third inch to the right due to the earth's rotation" [Fig. 1, page 18]. Now, we've all seen field goals that just hit the post and bounce out, so the rotation of the earth prevented a goal! Everyone is interested in the Super Bowl and long field goals, and I judged that there would be deep curiosity in the fact that the rotation of the earth could affect the outcome of a game.

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SR: A third of an inch? That seems like a dramatic effect. actually.

NDT: There are other stadiums where it would be half an inch. It depends on the angle of the stadium relative to the longitude.

SR: Did you put any money on the game?

NDT: I don't bet on things I can't control.... Actually, I enjoy roulette.

SR: Why roulette?

NDT: It's the purest of random. If I'm ever walking through a casino, the roulette will call to me and I'll bet on prime numbers just for fun.

SR: I love a good prime number. NDT: Who doesn't love a good prime number?

SR: This morning, I finished watching an interview that Stephen Colbert conducted with vou. You conversed about religion. I really want to believe in a soul. Is there some essence? NDT: Well, we live in a free country, which allows you to believe what you want. Because you think that something is true does not require that it is objectively true. The value of science concerning itself with objective truths is that we can make decisions and statements that affect everyone, which is why legislation really should be based on objective truths, not what is going on in your head.

In my memoir, I've written that when I die I want to be buried so that the energy content of my body will not go to the air





or to space [Fig. 2], which is of no use to any other life form at all. I would like my energy to be returned to the flora and fauna upon which I have dined my entire life [Fig. 3]. And so if you want to call that energy your "soul," okay, but it's in a very different form at that point. It's being shared with other animals and plants. Generally when people think of a soul, they think of their identity existing without the corporeal body and then still retaining some sense of yourself. There is no evidence that that happens. But for belief, evidence doesn't matter.

SR: That's what faith is. NDT: Here's something that intrigues me: If you have faith, you believe regardless of the evidence, yet if there's ever evidence to support faith, everyone goes to it and points to it. SR: A tortilla that resembles Jesus!

NDT: Everyone goes to it. SR: People will always want evidence. A random universe is a frightening universe for most



people. It's terror. NDT: Doesn't have to be. SR: Did you grow up religious? Was there a point in time when you consciously moved away from a tradition or were you always a freethinking guy? NDT: I was raised Catholic. But if someone says I was raised in some religion, that's insufficient information to actually know what was going on. The real question is Was the religion in the household? The answer is no. Important decisions in the household were executed rationally and secularly. So as

reasoning derive not from religion but from the rational analysis of circumstances. SR: Today, waiting for the train, I stepped into the sunlight to warm up, and because I'm coming to eat lunch with you, I'm thinking: What an amazing thing that there is this star and I can literally feel it warming me. NDT: There are two ways you can receive energy from your bumping against you. That's

a result, the foundations of my

environment: One is molecules the air. The other is radiative energy. That's what you're feeling from the sun. When they say "Get out of the sun, out of the heat," the air is the same temperature; it's just you're exposed to sunlight.

SR: Nature is wonderful and terrifying at the same time. NDT: Nature is not here to keep you alive. It has just as many ways to kill you as it does to sustain you. And if you cherry-pick this fact, you are left thinking that earth is some haven for life, but 96, 97 percent of all species that ever lived on earth are now extinct from the actions of the earth itself and an occasional asteroid to stir the pot. SR: When I was a kid, Pluto was

a planet. I feel bad for Pluto. NDT: The problem is not whether Pluto **[Fig. 4]** is a planet. The problem is the enumeration of the planets. "There are nine planets. What is the name of the fifth planet?" There's the false feeling that the memorized sequence from the sun is actually science, but it's not. If instead we had taught the solar system as "Well, you have these rocky objects that orbit the sun. Some are what we call asteroids, some are called Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars. And there are these icy things that orbit the sun. We have comets. We have Pluto. We have some moons." If you later learn that Pluto was reassigned to ice bodies, you'd say, Well, that's great! That's how it should be. It's better to understand something than to memorize something.

SR: It's hard to see an overall arc of human existence bending toward anything except doom. NDT: I see people saying, "My gosh, what's happening to the world?" Consider that between 1939 and 1945 an average of 1,000 human beings were killed per hour. Humans killing humans. Is there anything you're going to say today that rivals that? There was a day when the Ferguson trial would've only been local news. This kind of perspective allows me to be a little more hopeful about the world than other people. SR: I'm 62 now. Maybe it's my

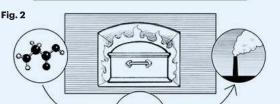
own existential dread. NDT: Your mortality is descending on you. I take to heart a line from Desiderata-

SR: I remember the song. [Singing] "You are the universe-NDT [not singing]: "You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees or the stars: you have a right to be here. And whether or not it's clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should." One of the other lines I take to heart is "Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth." So, I used to dance. And when I was dancing, I wasn't writing books, giving lectures, raising a family. While I enjoy watching dance, there is no part of me that says, "Gee, I wish I were still dancing." SR: What about wrestling? NDT: I thoroughly enjoy watching wrestling.

hind is what you're saying. NDT: That's not how I think of it. I think of it as that was a chapter I've written, and there are other chapters of my life that I'm writing. Many people who are unhappy are unhappy because

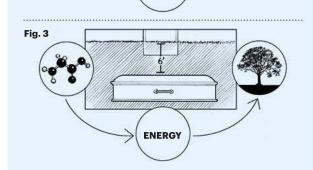
SR: You left those things be-

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there was some point in their past where there was some glory day, and as they get older they're not creating more glory days. They reflect on a time that they will never reach again, and it brings some level of dissatisfaction into their lives. I have circumvented that by simply making incumbent upon myself to always be productive in ways that are consistent with my physical body, my mental state of knowledge, but more important, my presumed growth in wisdom that would come with age. The problem is when people stop writing chapters. There's no reason why you can't keep writing chapters of your life. No matter who you are, no matter your state of education, you can take on hobbies, you can take on activities. you can travel. You can continue to connect with people. SR: I read the recent National Review story on you. You seem to inspire animus just for

being smart. NDT: William F. Buckley Jr. founded the National Review. He was an educated man and you didn't have to agree with him, but you could still see where his views were formulated and how they came about and where he was coming from. You could have an academic, intellectual disagreement with him and still go out with him and have a beer when you were done. It left me wondering what he would say of that article in his magazine. It was clear to me that this article had to create this liberal straw man beyond my actual professional identity so that they could attack this liberal straw man.



SR: At no point that I'm aware of have you aligned yourself with a political position publicly. NDT: If you want to attack someone that way, I'm not your best guy. If Richard Dawkins is speaking, he's speaking about religion. If Al Gore is speaking, he's speaking about climate change. Look at their Twitter feeds. There's a strident posture there, and strident postures can trigger huge followings. And they do and they have. I have fun in my Twitter stream. I'm not trying to convert anybody to anything. SR: You have more than 3 million followers and you're following 40-some people, a large number of whom are comics. NDT: I have a very high respect for professional comedians. What they do astonishes me. You have to be really smart and absorb everything, repackage it, bring it back to the person, and make them laugh at themselves. I can make people laugh during my talks because they didn't come to have me make them laugh. It's added value. So my job is way easier than that of a professional comic. [To waitress]: No coffee, thank you. Never had a relationship with caffeine. SR: You're better off for that, I think.

NDT: I enjoy hot chocolate every now and then, and if someone smuggled coffee beans

back from Brazil—if that's the construct-I'm not going to be antisocial about it.

SR: Nothing in the morning? NDT: I wake up and I go to work. I don't look for the cup of coffee. The universe is enough of a draw for me—to awaken me and have me bound out of bed and go to my office.

SR: People talk about God the same way. When you speak about the universe, there's an evangelical aspect.

NDT: I'm revealing information to people. I'm not creating it. And to the extent that people embrace it, I think they're empowered by it, because any time you have a bigger perspective today than you did yesterday, it's got to be only for the good of your mind, your body, your soul.

SR: I remember seeing the moon predawn on a road trip when I was a kid and being astonished, frozen by it. I've lost the ability to feel that way. NDT: A sense of wonder. Science literacy is an antidote to that, because there's the manifestation of the forces of nature at work everywhere and at all times. There's the occasional criticism of the scientist that to a poet, a rose is a rose, but to a scientist it's got some Latin genus species name, and on the premise that somehow the scientist has sucked the romance out of the natural world. But what they're not getting is that the scientist has the capacity to see it just as a rose but also has the capacity to see it as these other things. That's an enhancement, not a substitution. of one's appreciation of nature. SR: You once wrote, "We are not just figuratively but literally made of stardust." If that's not poetry, I'm not sure what poetry is.

NDT: The context is I describe the formation of elements and stars: They scatter into the galaxy and then they collapse, and there's gas clouds and dust clouds and they collapse and become a star system. It's a long run of science recitation, and I end it with that line. **SR:** Are there science groupies? NDT: At an event recently, there was a woman with the tattoo of my image on her arm. She would count as a groupie, I think. I was never a rocker, so I don't know the full range of behavior that a groupie can express, but I think the difference may be if you're a rocker and a grouple has access to you, they just want to be there. In my case, it's a little different. The most heartfelt encounters I've had are people saying, Because of you I majored in physics. Because of you I took up aerospace engineering, and my life has been a joy ever since. So, yeah, it's a following, but I don't take it lightly. It's an awesome responsibility—as in magnitude. **SR:** Do you kill bugs? NDT: Do I kill bugs?

SR: Insects. Do you kill them? If you're swatting a mosquito, do you think twice about stardust? NDT: I know that if I infiltrated the domicile of practically any other species of animal, they will attack me by whatever means they know. So if I find an insect in my home, it's a goner. I don't capture them in a net and then release them outside. I have no such time or patience for that. But I don't go out of my way to destroy them in their own habitat. They live where they do. I live where I do. and we share this earth. But if you come into my house, don't expect to survive the experience. SR: Something that I deeply believe in was reinforced by seeing you quoted to this effect: "The universe is a hilarious place." I really think that's true. NDT: Except the actual quote is

SR: I've noticed. NDT: Let me say that differently: I don't ever require that some-

"I happen to think the universe

sert opinions. I hardly ever give

is a hilarious place." I don't as-

opinions at all.

CONTINUED

THE ESQUIRE DOSSIER

NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON

Which makes him: 56 Spouse: Alice Young, a mathematical physicist and retired IT manager. Children named after planetary bodies: One; Miranda, 18, named after one of Uranus's moons. **Planetary bodies** named after him: One; the "13123 Tyson" asteroid. Hometown: Bronx.

Date of birth: October

5.1958

New York

hangout: The American Museum of Natural History's Hayden Planetarium. Where: He now serves as the Frederick P. Rose director. Selected accolades, nonscientific: A varsity letter on Harvard's wrestling team; a gold medal in a national dance tournament with the University of Texas dance team. Category: Internation-

al Latin ballroom.

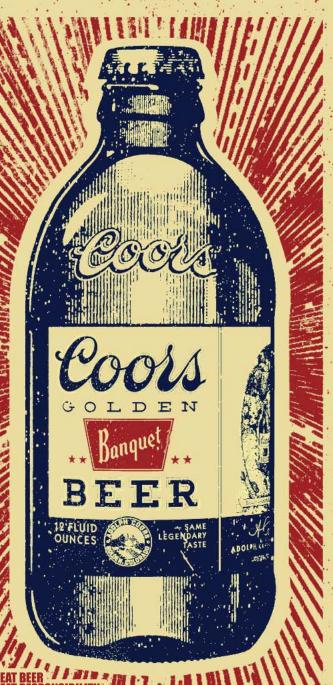
Favorite childhood

Selected accolades, scientific: 18 honorary doctorates; the NÁSA Distinguished **Public Service Med**al; the National Academy of Sciences Public Welfare Medal: People magazine's "Sexiest Astrophysicist. Notable contributions to humanity's understanding of the universe: Scholarly research on star formation, exploding stars, dwarf galaxies, and the structure of

our Milky Way. **Notable separation** from humanity's understanding of the universe: The planetary status of Pluto. Concepts he popularized: "The Pluto Files" (from TV series Nova) and Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey. New project: A new late-night TV series, StarTalk, adapted from his radio show, which premieres this month on the National Geographic Channel.

Banquet

STARDING



MATHINA

TODO WITH

©2015 COORS BREWING COMPANY GOLDEN, CO.

THE 1936 STUBBY BOTTLE IS BACK

CONTINUED

one else share my opinion on anything. I don't care. We live in a free country. Have whatever opinion you want. It's your opinion. I have my opinions. I don't care if you have my opinion. SR: You've said "I don't judge" in a number of contexts. NDT: I'm very careful about what I say and how I say it. **SR:** What do you do for fun? NDT: You're presuming that everything we've discussed was

not for fun. SR: It's a self-consciously stupid question. But if you'll humor me: any hobbies? Do you collect watches? Stamps? Build model trains?

NDT: I like reading old science books. I like going to shows with my wife—plays, musicals, comedies, dramas, that sort of thing. We enjoy going to restaurants that are slightly more expensive than they probably should be on the hope that there's some bit of culinary magic that we discover and maybe learn how to make for ourselves or that will draw us back. And I like drinking good wine. I have a modest collection of fountain pens. I like using liquid ink.

SR: That's pretty hardcore. NDT: No, it's just old-school. SR: I know you grew up in the city. Do you have a passionate attachment to any of New York's sports teams? NDT: I did to the New York Knicks in the early '70s. They were a winning team back then. A high school classmate was ball boy for the Knicks, and my shoe size was the same as that of Walt Frazier. He would throw away shoes after every few games. So my guy would pull them out of the trash and bring them outside. For about half a year, I had a supply of sneakers. SR: Game-worn by Clyde. **NDT:** They were expensive sneakers, and I liked Pumas. SR: What size?

NDT: Twelve and a half. Clyde wore 13, but when your feet are that large, a half size is not a problem.

SR: The Knicks haven't managed to rekindle your interest? NDT: No, and even if they were winning, I don't know that they would. It was just a moment in time. But I like watching extreme excellence in anything. I thoroughly enjoyed Michael Jordan. Who didn't?

SR: I didn't, but only because I was a Cleveland fan. I've since come to recognize his greatness. Back then, I took it personally.

NDT: If you have a cosmic perspective, you don't take anything personally. 18



THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION AT WAR

AT LEAST A FEW OF THEM

By BENJAMIN PERCY

There are two men in War of the Encyclopaedists (Scribner, \$26). Mickey Montauka former hipster, now an Army lieutenant in Baghdad-is sweat-soaked and dust-caked and stranded in a maze of a city that reeks of trash and charred flesh. He doesn't know who is an ally and who is an enemy. Cars explode. IED's explode. Men explode.

Halifax Corderoy is a graduate student at Boston University. He deconstructs literature and attends art nights at which people debate the aesthetic intent of various installations involving couches. He drinks too much and masturbates too much and showers too little.

Montauk and Corderoy started off the same after college. They called themselves the Encyclopaedists, and together they would play video games and quote Star Wars and throw ironically themed parties. But when Montauk's National Guard unit is deployed, their lives split geographically, narratively, romantically, existentially. The shards that settle into War of the Encyclopaedists form one of the most revealing novels yet about the millennial generation.

The novel was cowritten by Gavin Kovite, an infantry platoon leader in Baghdad from 2004 to 2005 and now an Army prosecutor, and Christopher Robinson, who has an M.F.A. and is a MacDowell fellow and a Yale Younger Poets Prize finalist. They are, as soldier and academic, uniformed in camouflage and corduroy, respectively. Recent war fiction-like Kevin Powers's The Yellow Birds, Phil Klay's Redeployment, and Ben Fountain's Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk-has accounted for the battleground overseas and at home, but none has focused so incisively on the choice between serving and shopping. Getting drunk at brunch and releasing your gun's safety.

Montauk and Corderoy keep in touch by

editing a Wikipedia entry about themselves. What starts off as a fun, absurd exercise grows more poetic and deadly serious. Their friendship is further complicated by their entanglements with two women who cycle in and out of their lives. Tricia is a grad student at the Kennedy School who rooms with Corderoy and desperately wants to make a difference: She canvasses for the Kerry campaign, helps film a documentary on an Indian reservation, and finally ships off to Iraq as an unembedded journalist, where she falls into bed with Montauk.

And then there is Mani, a nomadic artist who is made homeless, struck by a car, and ditched by her boyfriend, Corderoy, all in the same shitty day. He is torn up with guilt for his cowardice-abandoning her in a time of need-and she seeks support and comfort in Montauk, who marries her so that she can survive and pursue her art on his Army salary.

The story swirls, alternating between the four points of view, each of them colored by doubt and tragedy as the characters try out different identities and uncomfortably transition into adulthood. It's more fun to shirk responsibility than to take it on. It's easier to hook up than to fall in love. It's safer to be cynical than it is to be earnest. But people really do betray each other and bank accounts actually empty and marriages do end and wars kill.

The millennials have gotten a bad reputation (right or wrong, depending upon which generational rung you sit on) for a bewildering sense of self-regard and privilege, their dreams encouraged by their protective parents and discouraged by the recession. And this might be their defining novel—what feels like a human encyclopedia, its opposing entries revealing characters and a country in a confused state of revision following a nonsensical war. 19



Jacobs Family Newsletter!

How the largest family reunion in history is shaping up

By A.J. Jacobs

I'd always thought genealogy was like needlepoint, aqua aerobics, or The Mentalist: not really for my demographic.

Then, a year ago, I received a fascinating and somewhat alarming e-mail. It was from a man who said he was a dairy farmer in Israel-and my 12th cousin. Naturally, I thought he was going to ask me to wire \$10,000 to a secure bank account in Lagos.

Instead, it turns out, he's part of the new breed of family researchers who harness technology, such as DNA tests and Wikipedia-like collaborative Web sites, to create super-family trees actually, family jungles is a better metaphor.

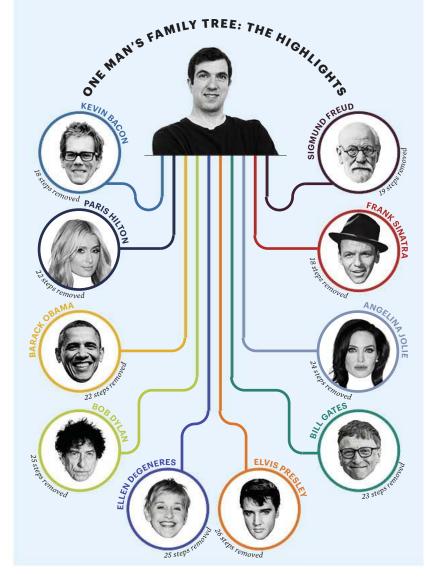
On sites like Geni, FamilySearch, and WikiTree, you can combine your little personal tree with preexisting trees. The results are these interlocking jungles spanning 160 countries. The biggest family tree in existence has 240 million humans connected by blood or marriage. It's genealogy's Big Data moment.

I'm on this tree. George Clooney is on it. So is Rosa Parks. And Robert Durst. And you can figure out how you are linked to them. The chains are often comically long and twisted. Barack Obama is my aunt's fifth great-aunt's husband's father's wife's seventh great-nephew. But still. He's mishpokhe.

You may say you already have too many cousins and you don't like most of them. But if you're like me, you'll find the One Big Tree project an irresistible combination of science, history, journalism, and jigsaw puzzle. Not to mention the titillation factor cousin hookups! Extramarital affairs! Genealogy may not be hip, but it's certainly hip adjacent.

And I actually think it's kind of important. The big-ass family tree is an astounding data set for scientists, who are studying it to see how diseases are passed down.

It's the new version of LinkedIn: If I want to work with someone, I figure out how he or she is my distant cousin. It's actually made me just a little more compassionate or at least a little less cranky.



For instance: I've always found director Brett Ratner particularly obnoxious. Then I found out he's my distant cousin-and it changed my perspective. I thought, He's not so bad. He's just being Cousin Brett. That's a trivial example, I know. But I'm hoping it will have a broader impact on intolerance.

With all these millions of newfound cousins, I decided that maybe I should throw a little get-together. So that's what I'm doing. I'm holding the Global Family Reunion (globalfamily reunion.com) on June 6. You're invited. All members of the human family are.

I want it to be like Woodstock, but with better bathroom facilities and more DNA links. The main event is in New York, but there are satellite parties all around the world.

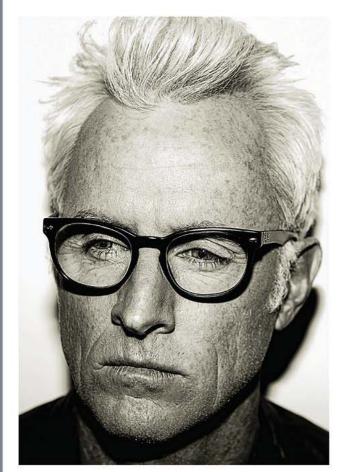
It's both the most interesting and most painful thing I've ever undertaken. I feel like I'm planning a bar mitzvah for the entire world. I spend my time haggling with party-tent rental outlets. I've secured sponsors, including those Web sites mentioned above.

We've got more than 30 speakers (Henry Louis Gates Jr.), comedians (Nick Kroll), exhibits, contests, and potato-sack races. We've got Sister Sledge playing "We Are Family" live.

Proceeds go to battling Alzheimer's.

I've been spreading the word, inviting everyone I can, since I want to break the current family-reunion world record of 4,514. I've met with a bizarre collection of famous cousins, from Daniel Radcliffe to George H. W. Bush.

I hope you'll join us. If you don't come, I will disown you, as will George Clooney. 12



P ANNOTHTED

Mad Men star John Slattery had some thoughts on his Esquire profile. He was not shy about sharing them.

By NATE HOPPER

TERRIFICE

We see John Slattery, and he smells of smoke. He spent the earlier half of this bitter February afternoon standing on a rooftop in Brooklyn, modeling spring wear for the United Kingdom edition of this magazine, in which his face will fit well among the paragons of what you and I want to look like. His plume of white hair—which makes him appear both aged and ageless-waves gently in the breeze as the Manhattan skyline furnishes the distance. Below, a document warehouse smolders, the smoke carried by the wind. The scent clasps onto him. The chill, too. Or, to cut into the masturbatory scene craft, as he does so well: "I've been freezing my balls off."

There's some slack in his posture, making it obvious why Mad Men showrunner Matthew Weiner has told him to stand straighter in order to portray cutting '60s ad executive and superlative son of a bitch Roger Sterling. It feels strange to hear humility coming from the mouth that said "When God closes a door, he opens a dress." But when I prod him about finding himself positioned for comparison with both Jon Hamm, who took the Mad Men role he wanted before he had a chance to audition for it, and George Clooney, ex-husband of his wife, Talia Balsam, he says: "I should feel worse, shouldn't I? I have a fairly-and I say fairly not because I'm without vanity-realistic image of myself compared with guys who look like that."

As a native Bostonian and the middle of six children, Slattery seems to enjoy jumping in and cracking wise more than answering questions about other actors—especially to tell a story about how cracking wise got someone hit, which happened often in the Catholic school both he and his father attended. "I saw some kid get slapped in the face. The priest said, 'Does anyone know how this saint died?' It was the patron saint of this priest's family. And the kid said, 'Yeah-syphilis.' The priest just slapped this kid so room. You never knew what was going to happen. I saw a kid get pushed

To ssep,

Marketairs. He had a broken leg.

After graduating from the Catholic University of America in 1984, Slattery drove his father's Chevy Malibu station wagon through the snow to an apartment in Gravesend, Brooklyn. He remembers running his TV up the stairs to watch his Pats ("I think Deflategate is a load of horseshit-the Patriots could have won that game playing with a Wiffle ball") beat the Dolphins in the famous Snowplow Game. He quit his day job "schlepping papers around town" for a continued.

MY MOTHER WON'T APPRICIATE THAT

PET-E (10 ser ST-JOSEPH

THE ILLUSTRIOUS COLLEAGUES OF JOHN SLATTERY



Yound + cute (SJP, I maan)



PENTON 45T-ALSO 1 look like a
Poor moris
berrge Pappares.



To Have those two i'n busame scene... Energ director should be so lucky.

more or

CONTINUED law firm after he got a Levi's commercial that could pay the rent. "I think everybody at that point wanted you to be Tom Hanks," he says. "He was this funny, young, comedic-leaning man who had dark, curly hair, and I was a young guy who was neither of those other things but had dark, curly hair." So is it Hanks he feels competition with, then-not Hamm or Cloonev? "I have met Tom Hanks. Several times. And he's been very nice." Would he be honest if Tom Hanks wasn't nice? *"If Tom Hanks was a douchebag? Are you kidding me? I'd tell everybody." Baby-faced Tom Hanks... "Goddamn Tom Hanks. Thinks he's so special...."

At some point in all this, Slattery moved to Manhattan. He still lives there now, with his wife and their Sometines 15-year-old son, who DJs for Slattery's friends' parties. Which brings us to Notorious B.I.G. "I could listen to that guy all day. Great lyrics. There's something about him. Some of those slower songs of his-" He stops himself. "I don't want to say any more about it. I sound like an even older white guy." This, his old-white-guy-ness, seems to be what he's most self-conscious about. He's perennially played the typeon Sex and the City, he played a politician who fetishized getting pissed on-since his 20s, when his hair graved and then whitened. He's 52 now, about a decade younger than Roger Sterling. He calls the "silver fox" compliment "a silly way to be known" and used to go to a salon for dyeing, but believes artificial coloring looks strange in anything but a set's artificial light. "You have good hair," he says to me. "We just had a little moment. I had an omelet, and then I told you you had nice hair in { 225 1+ this very intimate, sophisticated, met-

ro moment."

We toast our second beers, and I tell him how much I enjoyed his directorial film debut, the dead-black comedy God's Pocket, which he coadapted from the namesake book by Pete Dexter. He has fond memories from filming-of his mother-in-law nailing a shootout scene in one take, of shooting the opening sex scene between Philip Sevmour Hoffman and his Mad Men costar Christina Hendricks. "It was just a queen-size bed with those little brass legs and those little white wheels. The bed was wedged in place, but they were so fiercely doing their thing that the bed moved across the floor and right out of frame," he says. "The power of those two." That the film's domestic gross was less than the median price of a home in Missoula seems to frustrate him-a mood he hasn't shown, not even during the hair inquiries. But he and Hoffman laughed together as they watched the premiere at Sundance last year. Hoffman told Slattery that it was the first movie of his that he'd sat through in a decade.

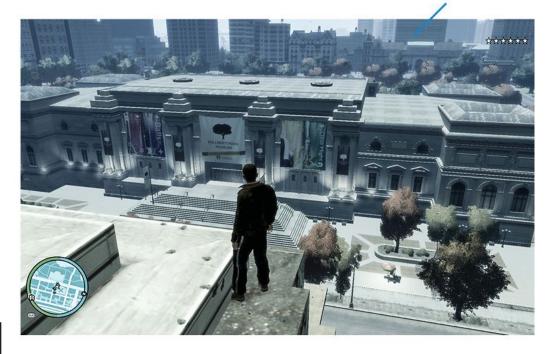
From the window, Slattery spots the car he had scheduled to arrive at the exact time our interview was scheduled to end. We say goodbye and shake hands. Then he walks-cuffs unbuttoned, balls presumably thawed-back into the chill. 12

Joyce Van Parion

A SHUNNING PROFILS.



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MaHB

Searching for Infinity at GameStop

The new generation of video games attempts to give us what real life can't: endless possibility By STEPHEN MARCHE

Many, many millions more people have visited the Libertonian, Grand Theft Auto IV's fake museum, than have visited the real Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Met, with its collection of the finest achievements of human civilization, receives 6.24 million visitors a year. GTA IV, in which you can shoot digital avatars of those artifacts with a machine gun, sold 25 million copies. Video games account for the bulk of American culture today: Minecraft is Web-searched more often than the Bible or Harry Potter, and GTA IV's successor, GTA V, earned \$1 billion in its first three days, making it the fastest-selling cultural product of all time. No other art form has the same scale and no other art form is in such a constant state of reinvention. Every few years has brought a revolution in gaming, bringing the form to now stand at the threshold of what traditionally has constituted the mark of the highest expression of art: the freedom of the viewer and the illusion of transcendence. Video games, which everybody, including their biggest fans, treats as disposable and shallow, are among the most profound works of art being made today. They reveal the depth of the collective craving for contact with the infinite.

Almost all great video games, and even the not-great ones, operate under the same premise: Come for the violence. Stay for the world. It's the stuff you barely notice that makes a game great the sound you make as you land on sandy soil, the way an elephant

bucks as it charges through a fence. In Grand Theft Auto, the water hazards on the golf course have lost balls at the bottom. In Assassin's Creed, you can pet street dogs-a gesture more pleasant and much weirder than the traditional conversations with hookers. Even in an iPhone puzzle game like Monument Valley, with its rich M. C. Escheresque designs, the environment and the peculiar sensation of moving through impossible architecture as you navigate its labyrinths provide the excitement. Pretending to kill people is fun, but the sense of a world, much more than the killing, is why you sit down and then stand up after five hours and have no idea what happened.

Unfortunately, the world always wears off. Even the most gorgeously detailed of the open worlds, like the Himalayas of Far Cry 4, reach the inevitable moment when you arrive at their edge, the little sadness of illusion's limits. The sense of infinite potential in Minecraft is so attractive-100 million subscribers, sold to Microsoft for \$2.5 billion—that everyone is willing to forget the crudity of every other aspect of the game. But Minecraft only seems infinite. In the "Far Lands," the algorithms underlying the game's graphics start to disintegrate. Of course, given human nature, a man named Kurt J. Mac has quit his job to voyage in search of the land where digital illusion dissolves. The journey will take him 25 vears. He currently has 370,000 subscribers to the YouTube channel on which he is documenting his journey. Only 22 years left to go.

It is at the edges that the questions these games start to pose become far more profound than they have any right to be. In Shad-

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE \$46.5-BILLION-A-YEAR VIDEO-GAME INDUSTRY

ow of Mordor, the combinatorial gameplay system means that player and random chance create distinct story lines; if you fail to kill an Orc, he's promoted; if you win, you are given new powers—the game responds dynamically to the play. Underneath all the Tolkien nonsense-wraiths and magical bows and all that shit-is a completely different response to dying then starting over: Life in Shadow of Mordor doesn't begin again.

No Man's Sky's "infinite procedurally generated galaxy," expected for release this summer and probably the most anticipated game of 2015, is more extreme than Shadow of Mordor or Minecraft, meaning artificial intelligence will generate the world as it is explored. No Man's Sky will have 18,446,744,073,709,551,616 planets. Visiting all of them would require 580 billion years, or roughly 42 times the age of the universe. This is not technically infinity, but it is close enough. The world of No Man's Sky is not just uncharted but also, to a certain extent, unchartable. Artificial intelligence rather than human beings creates it without the involvement of the designers. Einstein and Bohr famously debated whether God played dice with the universe. The creators of No Man's Sky do.

But even these newly invented worlds lose their newness, no matter how infinite they manage to be. Games always leave the same inevitable deflation after the initial rush of joy-that's why you always need to buy more. In SimCity, you were supposed to be able to do anything, except it turned out you could do only a limited number of things. In Second Life, you could do whatever you could do in the real world, but who really wants that? Video games are inherently ephemeral even though they are great works of art, because the sense of a world

emerging dissolves on contact. Perhaps all discovery is ephemeral, and all infinities turn out to be merely human.

That is the existential despair at the heart of Grand Theft Auto and Far Cry and Minecraft and no doubt No Man's Sky as well: They throw themselves hard against the limits of the reality they make with all the cleverness and computational power they can muster. Then there's just another end, just another edge beyond which they cannot pass. There is another way to imagine an infinite game, of course: as actual life. The gamification of the everyday is already encroaching on the sum total of human experience. There are already apps to turn your fitness regime into a game, to turn your shopping into a game, to turn



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Platforms: PlayStation, Xbox.

Earnings: \$1.98 billion. Estimated cost to develop: \$137 million.

Setting: Fictional southern-California proxy Los Santos.

Chappelle's Show syndrome: The satirical treatment of violence, materialism, and easy sex in GTA V attracts players who enjoy violence, materialism, and easy sex.



FAR CRY 4 Platforms: Xbox,

PlayStation. Copies sold: 7 million.

Genre: First-person shooter.

Plot: A man returns to his Himalayan homeland and becomes a rebel leader in a civil war.

Uncontroversial sociopolitical stance: Anti-oppressive govern-

ment regime. Add-on adventure:

Valley of the Yetis. Yeti presence: Nominal.



MONUMENT VALLEY

Platforms: Mobile devices

Number of downloads:

2.4 million.

Genre: Puzzle-solvina. headache-inducing. Puzzle: A series of mazes

through which players lead the protagonist, Princess Ida.

Headache: A Japanese print- and minimalistsculpture-inspired landscape that has been compared to the optical illusions of M.C. Escher.



SHADOW OF **MORDOR**

Platforms: Windows, PlayStation, Xbox.

Genre: Third-person fantasy.

Setting: J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium.

Legendarium? The fictional universe in which Lord of the Rings is set. Plot: A ranger seeks revenge against the evils of Sauron for murdering his family.

Bummer! Totally.



MINECRAFT

Platforms: All of 'em. Creator: Overweight Swedish billionaire Markus "Notch" Persson. **Objective:** Players choose "creative" or "survival" mode, both of which involve worldbuilding-resource gathering, domicile constructing-in an archaic

So it's sort of like a medieval fantasy version of SimCity? Sure.

agrarian setting.



NO MAN'S SKY

Platforms: PlayStation, eventually Windows. Genre: Single- or multiplayer adventure. Release date: 2015.

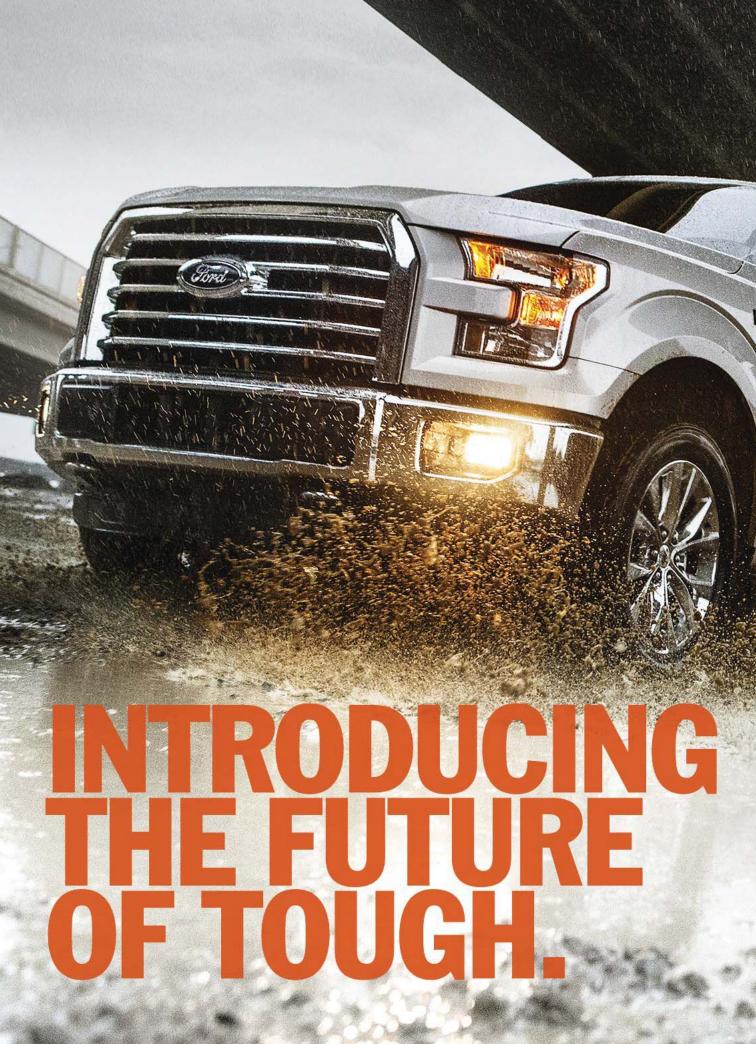
Protagonist: Interplanetary explorer/botanist/zoologist/space combatant.

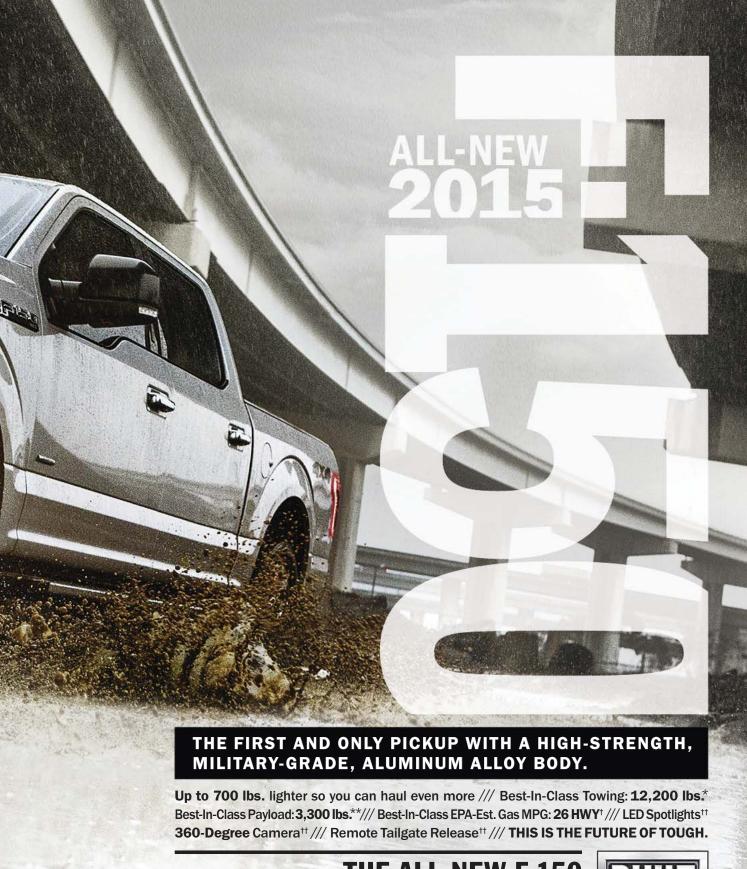
Setting: Virtually limitless, procedurally generated open universe.

Not for: Completists.

your marriage into a game. Tinder turns sex into a game. Swipe left. Swipe right. For a few extra dollars, you can take back your last move. What happens when Facebook manages to combine the virtual reality of Oculus with the social network? How will that game—working title: Status—be different from what we used to call society?

The revolutions in gaming are the perfect product of a postrevolutionary age: They generate worlds of vast choice in which you can't really change anything. Exactly like the Internet or the mall. No matter how much variety you can blow up, the structures of life remain standing. Welcome to the fundamental condition of our time. It's available on Xbox or PS4. 12





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Connectedness: A Reckoning

Questions that should be frequently asked about the so-called Internet of Things—its origins, its vulnerability, its inevitability **By JENNINGS BROWN**

What is the Internet of Things, and why would anyone want all their things to connect to the Internet?

Imagine if everything you owned communicated with everything else. Your closet recommends clothes based on the weather. Your coffeemaker adds an extra shot of espresso because you went to bed later than usual. The thermostat and lighting adjust based on your body temperature and your location in the house, as gauged by your smartwatch. Maximum efficiency, lower bills. Your whole day goes like this, because your house, car, and office desk have connected devices, with your watch serving as the central hub that connects all your separate environments seamlessly.

That is cool. Also creepy.

Well, Google already knows everything you do online, right? Now that it owns Nest and Dropcam and is developing a lot more smart-home tech, Google soon could know everything you do offline as well.

Because soon you'll never be offline.

Right. But Nest promises it won't share your data and will use it only for personalized suggestions.

Can't I just get non-Google products?

three main players in the smart-home arena: There's Google. There's Apple, which wants to use its HomeKit platform as a hub that connects other devices. And then there's Samsung, which just jumped in this past January, announcing that 90 percent of its devices will be online by 2017 and 100 percent by 2020. Even though Samsung is late to the game, it's going to have the biggest impact.

Why's that?

Three reasons: First, it's

the world's largest tech company in salesyes, bigger than Apple. Second, it seems to be the most open to being open, as it enables its devices to work with non-Samsung-connected products. And third, it already has good, trusted products that fit into every area of your life and home: washers and dryers, refrigerators, vacuums, stoves, security systems, lights, tablets, wearables, TVs (already the center of your home life), and phones (already the center of your very existence).

Can you trust Samsung?

These images are not as weird as they may first appear.

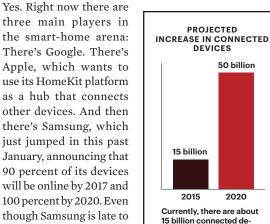
No one knows what these companies are really doing with information they collect. Samsung just got in trouble because the privacy policy for its new Smart TV states that its voice-activation feature could share your spoken information with third parties. A publicity kerfuffle ensued, kicking off a privacy debate that took place on the Internet of People. Samsung might adopt stronger policies in the future. Apple, on the other hand, has taken a stance similar to Nest's, stating that no HomeKit-connected product can use users' data for advertising or datamining. But then again, Apple has also been accused of sharing your Siri requests.

So how secure is the Internet of Things?

About 70 percent of devices are vulnerable

to hacking, and the average device has around 25 vulnerabilities. Someone could hack the Internet of Things and shut off your security system or access the Dropcam you use to check in on your kids.

But that'll get better. It has to. All three of these companies have made pledges about security. But honestly, if someone wants to crack your smart locks bad enough, he can probably find a way. Of course, the same goes for dumb locks. 12





Tanqueray No TEN



Bread Salad for Skeptics

Plus, a little love for lamb belly, the most delicious of oft-overlooked meats

By CHEF SHANE SOLOMON, PIZZERIA STELLA, PHILADELPHIA AS TOLD TO FRANCINE MAROUKIAN

When it comes to spring cooking, everything is in play: The market is unpredictable, the weather is temperamental, and you need a dish that accommodates both. Serve this salad slightly warm to straddle the seasons, starting with delicate spring-market finds and then moving on to the months of lush summer produce. Panzanella is an architectural dish, constructed from several building-block recipes. Some are larder staples you can make a week or more in advance—multipurpose flavoring agents, like poached tomatoes and garlic-infused oil, that can cycle into your everyday cooking. And while the produce mix and croutons require same-day attention, it's okay to cook the lamb belly a few days in advance and refrigerate it whole, cutting lardoons when it's time to render. Sometimes called breast of lamb, the belly is a flat slab that runs about 12 to 16 ounces, depending upon the size of the animal, and like pork belly, it requires some work to tenderize. But the flavorful rendered fat and slightly gamey meat bring so much to the plate. Lamb belly isn't a cut you find wrapped in plastic in a supermarket meat case. But it's easy enough to get from local butchers, especially if they work full animal. These guys are good with a knife, can tell you where every piece of meat comes from, and let nothing go to waste.

- Cut several thick slices from a rustic loaf into 1-inch squares (about 16), toss with garlic oil,* and toast in a 400-degree oven until golden. Transfer to a large bowl and soften with vinaigrette.* Set aside.
- >Over medium-high heat, lightly film a large skillet with vegetable oil and render 16 one-inch-square lamb lardoons* until crispy.
- about 5 minutes. > Drain excess fat and reserve, leaving just enough oil in the pan to cook 2 heaping cups of vegetables—fresh fava beans and fresh chickpeas (shelled and blanched), slender asparagus (2-inch pieces, split in half), spring onions and radishes (thinly sliced), young artichokes (cleaned and quartered)—whatever the market holds. Keep the lardoons in the pan and add the vegetables, sautéing quickly to maintain different textures, about 3 minutes. > Add 1/2 cup poached tomatoes* and 2 large handfuls dandelion greens, tossing gently to wilt, and quickly deglaze pan with 2 Tbsp vinaigrette. (At this point, you can drizzle in some of the reserved lamb fat if you like.) >Transfer to crouton bowl and quickly flip to mix. Plate and cover with grated pecorino. CONTINUED

MaHB



CONTINUED THE BUILDING

BLOCKS

Make these ingredients when you have time and save them for the moments you don't.

GARLIC OIL

TIME: 1 hour **ADVANCE PREP: Up to**

2 weeks

- > Place ½ cup peeled garlic cloves and 1 cup vegetable oil in saucepan over low heat until the cloves are soft.
- > Cool at room temperature, leaving cloves in oil (it steeps like tea), and store in refrigerator for future use.

VINAIGRETTE

TIME: 2 minutes **ADVANCE PREP: Up to**

2 weeks

► Mix 1/3 cup red-wine vinegar with 1 Tbsp each Diion mustard (to enhance lamb flavor) and honey (to balance bitterness of dandelion greens), and slowly whisk in 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil. Transfer to jar with lid and store at room temperature for future use.

LAMB LARDOONS

TIME: 3 hours

ADVANCE PREP: Up to 3 days

> Rub both sides of lamb belly with 1 Tbsp olive oil, zest of 1 lemon, coarsely chopped needles from 1 sprig rosemary, 2 tsp kosher salt, 1 tsp ground black pepper, and let stand for 1 hour. Place on rack on sheet pan and roast in 300-degree oven until crisp, about 1¾ hours, rotating pan halfway through. Remove, let cool at room temperature, and cut into 1-inch squares. (Or wrap whole and refrigerate, bringing to room temperature and cutting into squares before rendering.)

POACHED TOMATOES

TIME: 30 minutes **ADVANCE PREP: Up to**

2 weeks

- > Place 1 pint grape tomatoes, 4 bay leaves, 1/2 tsp pimentón (Spanish smoked paprika), and 2 cups olive oil in saucepan just below simmering until the tomato skins start to burst and they absorb seasoning.
- > Cool at room temperature and store in refrigerator for future use.



WHAT IT FEELS LIKE... TO BE AN AMERICAN NINJA WARRIOR

SPECIFICALLY A VERY SMALL, VERY SUCCESSFUL ONE **By KACY CATANZARO**

Last year, five-foot 100-pound former gymnast Kacy Catanzaro earned the nickname "Mighty Kacy" when she became the first woman to make it to the American Ninja Warrior finals. This season (premiering on the Esquire Network May 26 at 9:00 P.M.), Catanzaro plans to win it all.

- > I'll be competing for the new season in Houston in less than two weeks. To train, I do functional body-weight circuits with my boyfriend, Brent-he was the first American to finish the "cliffhanger." Body-weight training keeps you lean and strong for the course. You don't wanna have too much heavy muscle and have to hold up all that extra weight.
- > Cut your nails. If you look at the palm of your hand and can see your nails sticking out from that side, they're too long-it gives you that little bit of extra room on the cliffhanger.
- > I love that the water is there, because you won't get hurt like you might if you fell onto a mat. But it is just kicking you while you're down. Like, I've already failed. I'm already disappointed. And now I'm soaking wet, my hair is a mess, I'm cold, I'm wrapped in a towel, and my shoes are dripping. It's embarrassing.
- > We don't get to see the course until we're there that day. So there's no practicing on it, no preparing for it. You can try and think of what you expect to be there, but there's no reason to drive yourself crazy-they're always gonna have new obstacles.
- > The ring toss this past season in Dallas was

definitely a big surprise for me—just because I had never seen that before. I knew I could get through it—my grip strength was strong from rock climbing and I could make it endurancewise-I just had to make sure that I stuck to my technique and stayed strong mentally.

- > The crowd is really close to you. I was in between two of the obstacles and I was taking a second to breathe and prepare when I heard people in the crowd yelling, "We love you, Kacy!" And I was like, "I love you guys, too. Thanks!" It was kind of nice to take a break from being inside my head and appreciate where I was.
- > Being so short is definitely a disadvantage. In Dallas, there was a part of the course where the guys could swing and with one arm reach the next obstacle. I had to wind up, swing, and actually let go and catch the next one with both hands. My body was like mush at the end.
- > I'm not really sure how the Mighty Kacy nickname came about. It's funny, because when we were rewatching the episode, they had it in the corner with a hashtag. I wonder who came up with that?
- > It's hard to explain how I felt during it because I kinda blacked out. I was just so overjoyed—no woman had ever done that before.

-AS TOLD TO TYLER CONFOY



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The Secret Weapon

Three or four drinks in, look to the sherry cocktail **Drinking by DAVID WONDRICH**

on the polished mahogany, the relaxed pulse of the music blends with the sounds of a couple dozen voices engaged in pleasant conversation, the lights shining through the ranks of whiskey bottles behind the bar enfold you in an amber glow, your companion is amusing—or even, perhaps, charming—and the cocktail you've just taken the last sip of was cold and strong and necessary, and you can feel it reaching into each individual capillary in your body, soothing each individual nerve. The bartender stands in front of you, her eyebrow raised. What will it be?

Sometimes, of course, the answer is easy: another, please, just like that one. But despite their modest size, modern cocktails are strong, and there are times when you don't want another just like that. You want to prolong the experience, but for whatever rea-

son (and that's certainly no business of ours) you don't want to double your buzz. Fortunately, there's a simple solution, and it doesn't involve punting to champagne or beer or the like. As pleasant as those drinks are, they somehow seem like a missed opportunity when you've got an expert drink mixer standing in front of you, waiting to roll up anything you desire.

Drinkers in the 19th century were aware of this problem. Their cocktails, originally made of nothing more than straight booze with dashes of this and that, had to be. The first solution was the manhattan—one of those straight-booze cocktails but with a third or half of the fuel replaced by low-octane vermouth. But if you've ever drunk manhattans, you know that while the pleasure is great, they are no aid to sobriety whatsoever. It took another turn of the wheel to solve the problem. What if you took that manhattan and replaced the remaining spirits with sherry? Mixed thus, this Spanish wine has the texture and depth of flavor of whiskey or brandy or gin (depending on the style) but the same low proof as the vermouth.

The same solution seems to have popped up on both sides of the country simultaneously, in the early 1880s. In San Francisco, little Louis Eppinger, proprietor of a popular saloon on Halleck Street, made his version with dry vermouth and called it the Bamboo cocktail. In New York, "handsome" Joe McKone, of the famous Hoffman House, made his with sweet vermouth and called it the Adonis, after a musical. Before long, the lines between them blurred, and you'd find many a bartender making his Bamboo with sweet vermouth.

Either way, it's a great cocktail. If you like 'em dry, a Bamboo with fino sherry and dry vermouth is as cold and dry as the Atacama Desert; if you want something bordering on the plush, an Adonis with a mellow old oloroso sherry and one of the richer sweet vermouths we're getting these days is as comforting as fleece pajamas.

Whatever you call it, the beauty of this formula is that it's easy to order in any craft-cocktail bar, even if the young Picasso behind the bar has never heard of it. Simply ask for sherry and vermouth 50-50 with a couple dashes orange bitters and a twist, up. Not an order you could get away with at McSwiggan's, but you aren't paying 12 bucks a cocktail there, either. And if they don't have sherry, you can try tawny port or Madeira. If they don't have vermouth, well, you were planning on moving on anyway, or you would have had that next one just like the first. 12

BAMBOO COCKTAIL

Stir well with cracked ice: >1½ oz chilled fino or Manzanilla sherry >1½ oz dry French

vermouth
> 2 dashes
orange bitters
Strain into
chilled cocktail
glass and twist
lemon peel
over the top.

ADONIS COCKTAIL

Stir well with cracked ice:
>1½ oz oloroso or amontillado sherry
>1½ oz sweet Italian

vermouth

> 2 dashes Angostura bitters Strain into chilled cocktail glass and twist orange peel over the top.



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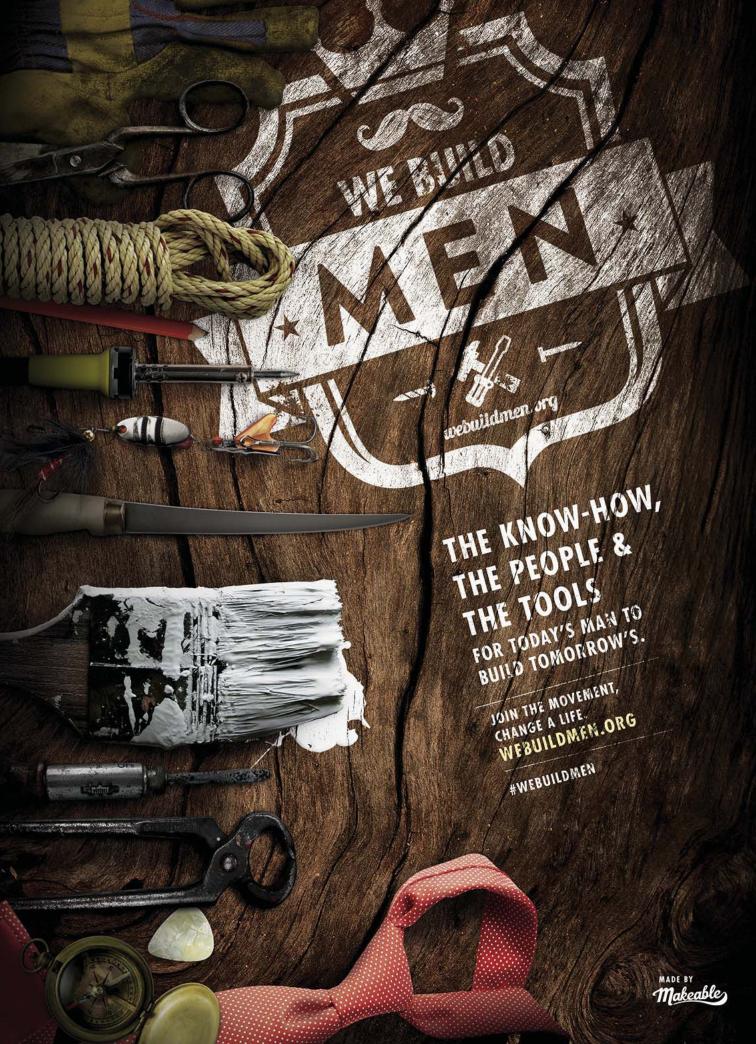
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*Esquire cannot guarantee that this joke will be funny to everyone





Sex with Stacey Woods

Is everyone having more sex than me?

It's actually "more sex than I." You see, when you ask if everyone's having more sex than you, what you're really saying is "Is everyone having more sex than *I am*, not *me* am; more sex than I, [insert your name] *of* [insert your address and any other relevant information], am having, have had, will ever have, right here, right now?" But it's highly unlikely that everyone is having more sex than you are. Data scientist Seth Stephens-Davidowitz, who uses big-data sets, like Google searches, to see if people lie in sex surveys, has found that "people are greatly exaggerating how much sex they're having" and that "sex in the United States is surprisingly rare." Why, in Delaware they haven't done it in years. And my pending research on the kind of people who take sex surveys informs us that the reason it

seems like everybody is having more sex than you, [insert your name], has to do with something called "pluralistic ignorance." Essentially, it's when a large group of people privately rejects something but publicly goes along with it because they think everyone else likes it. And although one could use this theory to explain Jimmy Fallon, I think it can also help us understand the rea-

...AND OTHER TOPICS

Who will be the Republican presidential nominee in 2016?

They said they're just going to use that elephant logo and do everything on Twitter.

Is it ethical to withhold sex to get someone to do what you want? Not if they signed the waiver, no.

How soon is too soon to joke about a tragedy? If no one's said "too soon" yet, let about five "too soon"s go by.

son it seems like everyone's having more sex: Social media allows us to see everything everyone's having all the time, so we believe we should be having it, too. For example, people seem like they're having more sex than you, but they also seem like they're having more scones, which might not be true, either. Your use of the comparative more leads me to believe that you've had at least some sex, and if you've had at least some, you're probably doing at least as well as, if not better than, they are. Why don't you Instagram it more?

How do I get out of my own head during sex? I'm always too worried about what she's thinking to enjoy myself.

Oh, good, it's working! I must run and tell the others. But to get out of your, her, anyone else's head during sex, experts suggest concentrating fixedly on the physally having. Now, I know not thinking about thinking can be challenging, so the experts someone consulted for me prescribe a full course of daily meditation. I'm not sure where you get it, and I've never done any myself, but I see no harm in giving it a try after you've tidied up a bit, adjusted the lighting, temperature, ambience, checked your e-mail, put all your affairs in order, and made sure everything is perfect for relaxing. But do take care of this problem. Donald S. Strassberg, professor of psychology at the University of Utah, says that asking yourself questions like "Am I gonna get and keep my erection? Am I going to be able to last long enough so that she feels satisfied? How do I compare with previous people she's been with?"-vou know, the basic habits you develop working in the service industry-can become "a self-fulfilling prophecy," and you don't want one of those. For now we both suggest employing your most accessible and reliable fantasy quickly and guiltlessly. "What you're doing when you're fantasizing," maintains Strassberg, "is providing your partner with a gift-a more turnedon partner." A good gift, perhaps, but most people do prefer cash.

ical sensations you're actu-

Got a sex question of your own? E-mail it to us at sex@esquire.com.



MARK NASON FOOTWEAR





Killer Pharma

Tech fever in the markets is giving everyone a headache. But biotech may be just the cure.

The Portfolio by KEN KURSON

Retrograde amnesia, the inability to surface memories formed before a specific date, is rare in real life, yet strangely prevalent among '80s sitcoms and tech investors. When a company like WhatsApp can command a \$20 billion valuation—that's almost half a billion per employee—alarms should be going off like cannons. But they aren't. The Internet's ability to squeeze ever-greater efficiency out of the industries it dis-

rupts has propelled Uber, Airbnb, and countless others to heights that would make anyone holding a 1999 copy of *The Wall Street Journal* wonder what caused all these head injuries.

But there is still some value to be had from disruption: biotech. The way human beings are medicated is undergoing a change that closely resembles what the Internet did to classified ads. Instead of creating a single pill that treats all two million people with a particular disease, individualized medicine has the potential to change the very nature of what it means to be medicated.

For the last 100 years, drug development consisted of small-molecule treatments aimed at mass audiences. For some patients it worked, for some it didn't; sometimes we knew why, often we didn't; and gigantic pharmaceutical companies grew rich. And then, at the turn of the last century, we began to understand a bit more about human genetics—what makes us all different. We knew not only how many genes there were but also what many of them did. We still don't know what to do with all this information, but we are getting better. And just now we are beginning to translate what we know about human genetics to make medicine. Personalized medicine. We are learning not only what "works" but also what makes us susceptible to illness by deciphering where genet-

ics may load the gun and the environment pulls the trigger, and then devising personalized therapies.

In my opinion, the most promising wing of this paradigm shift is cancer immunotherapy. It is no longer just a theory. Patients today are literally having their cells reprogrammed, basically teaching their immune system how to distinguish cancer cells from healthy cells. The most promising of the companies pursuing this is Juno Therapeutics. Five minutes on its Web site will explain it better than I can here, but the basic notion is to take patients' own T cells-the cells that fight infection and pathogens-grow them in large quantities, reprogram them to go after specific types of cancer, and then inject them back into patients. In short, you treat patients with their own better-trained immune system. And the results from early clinical trials are amazing. As is the stock price. Three months after going public, Juno is sitting on a multibillion-dollar market cap, though it's still a couple years from a commercial product. But when you look at WhatsApp and what the maximum value to planet earth is if it really is great at bringing messages from one dipshit teenager to another and compare it with Juno's maximum utility, the comparisons start to favor the lifesavers.

Another good example is Alexion Pharmaceuticals. Cofounded in 1992 by a doctor at Yale, it didn't get its first drug approved until 2007, and that was for

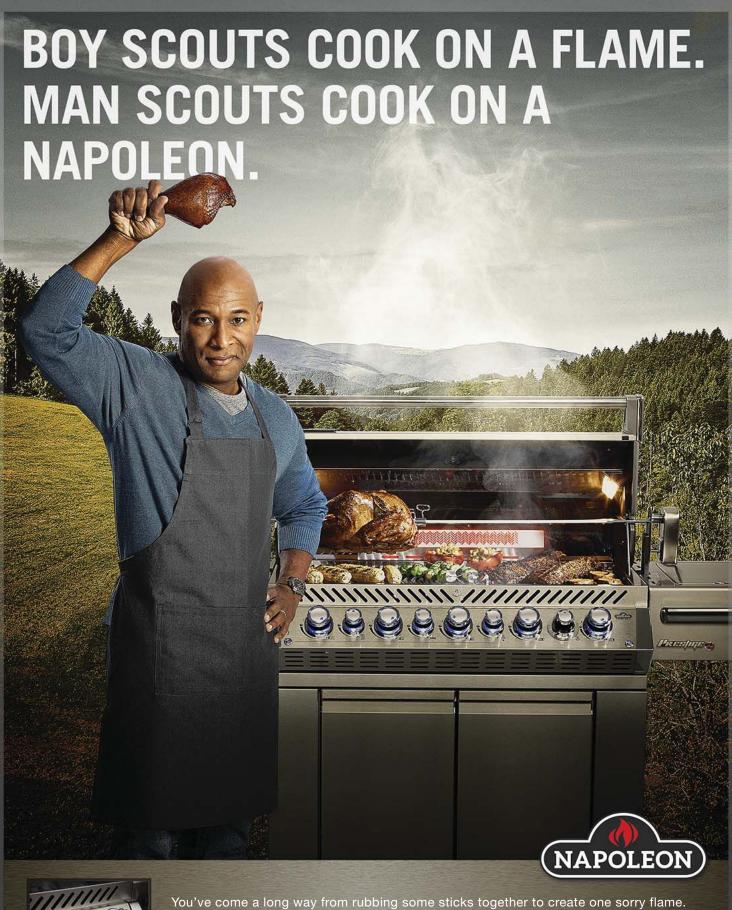
a very rare blood disease. But now it's all over genetic medicine. It has 2,300 employees and one drug for a couple rare diseases with different indications, but its \$37 billion market cap speaks to applications for much more prevalent disorders.

Even old-school companies are remaking themselves. After 150 years, pharma giant Bristol-Myers Squibb has essentially reinvented itself as a biotech innovator, shedding consumer junk like Mead Johnson. (Enfamil? Is that...medicine?) It got out of the primary-care business and targeted specialized medicine, HIV, cancer, genetics, even some rare diseases—which was unheard of for big pharma with its massive cost structure. It did so via a series of acquisitions, starting in 2009, with biotech innovators Medarex, ZymoGenetics, Inhibitex, and just recently, Flexus Biosciences.

The point is it used to be that the Pfizers of the world couldn't bother developing drugs for diseases with too few patients and the small companies couldn't afford to. But now both are changing. The giant companies are developing drugs to treat individuals while the small companies are innovating so quickly that they're affecting giant diseases that had been looked at forever.

The results—clinically and financially—are enormous and coming fast. Just a few years ago, a diagnosis of melanoma was a virtual death sentence. Today, it can be managed indefinitely. It might not be long before doctors routinely identify a patient's genotype and create specific combinations of medicines that will knock down formerly lethal diseases for many years, even to the point where they're manageable as a chronic condition.

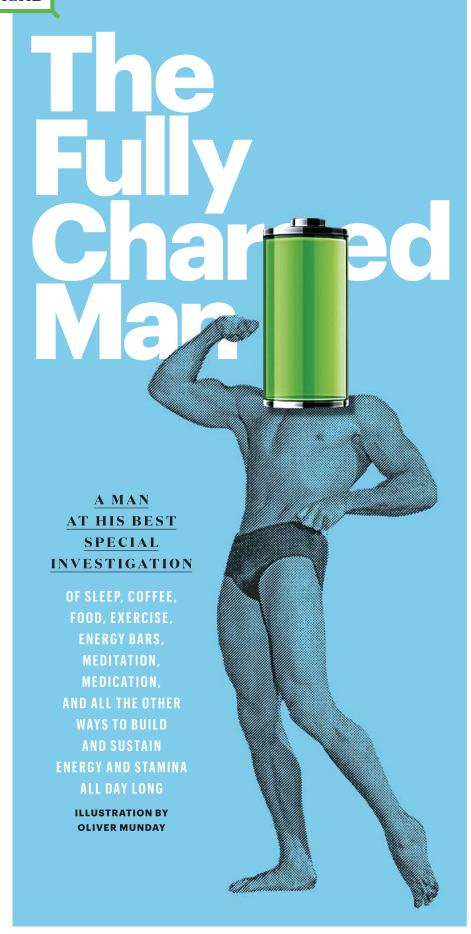
These days, a giant company like Bristol-Myers and its immunotherapy Opdivo are looking at \$1.5 billion in sales next year, out of nowhere. That's miracle stuff. Worthy of miracle valuations.





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Energy is everywhere. Obviously. But more important, the energy we need to live and work and perform at our highest levels is one meal, or one workout, or one decent night's sleep away. It's in the hormones that course from our glands through our body to combat or create stress. It's in the sugars and chemicals that flow through our blood to fire up (or power down) our muscles and brain. It's in the muscles that can be trained and strengthened until every move we make requires less effort. When we understand the fundamentals of energy itself and how it interacts with our complex physical and mental systems, we can control how it makes us feel. We can enhance and maximize it, and recharge our bodies and minds in a world that seems hellbent on grinding us down. Success, fitness. fullness: It all comes down to energy. Obviously. And it comes down to us.

Step One: Sleep, Dammit!

Because a man can't thrive without it. (We tried.)



We know, we know: eight hours. But although that's true for most people, it is not true for everybody. Some of us need ten to feel our best. Others are fine with six (though studies show that those people often carry sleep

debt and tend to crash a lot). We asked one man to find his sleep sweet spot by slowly depriving himself of winks, a few at a time.

Day 1: The plan is to begin with my normal, science-approved seven to eight per night and work my way down to as few hours as possible. The more you worry about sleep, though, the harder it is to let yourself sleep, so although I shoot for seven and a half the first night, I don't even get six. At 8:50 a.m., I write in my journal: *A little drowsy.* I let out a yawn shortly before lunch. At 4:13, I hit a wall.

Day 3: I drink four beers before calling it a night. Not for any particular reason—mainly because I'm bored and have all this extra time before I go to bed. The target is now six and a half. I barely get five. There's a throbbing pain in the back of my neck. Nevertheless, the next day isn't so bad. I clock my first yawn at 6:56 P.M. But I rapidly deteriorate as the night drags on.

Day 5: Six hours seems to be the sweet spot. In bed at 12:30, awake at 6:30. A leisurely evening and a calm, quiet morning. The bathroom all to myself. An extra minute to pick out a tie. Out the door and on the early, less-crowded train. The coffee at work is hotter and tastes fresher, too. The Zen-like notion of removing any and all rushed actions from my morning and night routines improves

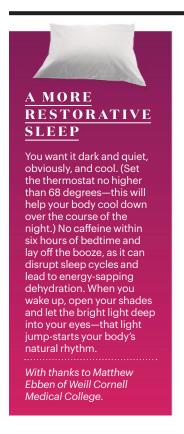
my mood throughout the day. Maybe I'll switch to six full-time?

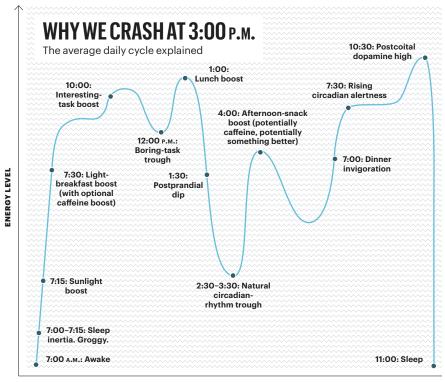
Day 8: The novelty wears off. I go from six hours to five and a half, and the next day every menial task becomes a bear. I can't find the roll of aluminum foil, yet it's sitting in its usual spot on the pantry shelf. I curse at the dog. Coffee does no good. I don't deviate far from my typical weekday caffeine intake—a medium black coffee in the morning, a medium Diet Coke at lunch—but instead of producing any slight buzz, caffeine simply starts to make me feel neutral. I begin meditating for three minutes every day before my last subway stop. It works. Even when I'm tired and cranky, meditation always helps get me through the tough spots.

Day 14: I get down to four hours and 45 minutes: hardly a world record. People with two or three jobs get that amount or less every night. But my calves feel like 40-pound sandbags. I just want it to be over, and finally it is. It takes a full week before I start to feel like myself again.

The verdict: Six hours is manageable. Seven is ideal and gives me enough time to experience all the benefits of both deep sleep, the particularly restorative kind that releases important hormones, and REM sleep, in long stretches. Anything less than seven hours cuts into one or both of those (for me, anyway) and doesn't give my brain or body enough time to reset and repair itself, so I'm stuck playing catch-up the next day. And playing catch-up, well, that's exhausting.

—JOHN HENDRICKSON





TIME OF DAY



The More Effective Cup of Coffee

How to make it really work for you, every time you drink it

- Wait 15 minutes (at least) after waking to drink it. Given your body's desire to get more sleep, what's known as "sleep inertia," it's natural to wake up tired. This often wears off in about 15 minutes, but if you've already drunk some of your first cup by then, it can lead to your consuming more caffeine than you ultimately need.
- Take an hour and a half break (at least) between cups. Many people drink a cup and don't feel anything. So they drink another cup and then they start to feel it. But that's not because of the second cup. Caffeine takes about a half hour or so to reach its maximum effectiveness, so that kick they are actually feeling is the first cup coming into effect. After another 30 minutes, the second cup kicks in and ... well.
- Don't drink too much of it. Two hundred milligrams of caffeine is what you'll find in most 12-ounce cups of coffee, and this amount will bring most people up to their peak-performance levels for two hours, at which point the caffeine will begin to slowly leave your system. (At the two-hour mark, the sleep and food you've had will hopefully pick up the slack for a while, along with the ascendancy of your circadian rhythm.) Anything more than 200 milligrams in a two-hour time frame results in diminishing returns and increases the likelihood of fidgetiness.
- Save it for when it counts. So here's how it works: When you drink a cup of coffee-or tea, or soda, or some other energy-boosting concoction—at the same time every day, your brain will begin to anticipate and adjust for it in advance. After a while, that means your regularly scheduled morning cup of coffee isn't giving you an energy boost—it's simply maintaining what your brain has come to expect as the status quo. (The adjustment also means

FOUR OLICK FATIGUE FIXES



WALK

Exposure to direct sunlight promotes energizing body chemistry, and walking invigorates us by getting our heart pumping blood and by activating muscles. A faster clip is more effective than a leisurely stroll.

BUT...

Tricky to do when it's really hot, or really cold, or raining.



MEDITATION

When you're under pressure, your adrenal gland pumps hormones to help you get by, and meditation (and allowing your mind to wander and reset) gives it a break.

BUT...

A quiet, semiprivate space in which to take deep breaths and think about nothing can be hard to come by. If you don't have an office of your own or access to a semiprivate room, you can always do it in your parked car.



THE 15-SECOND BEND

Bend at the waist until your head is between your knees and hold the position for 15 seconds. The rush of blood to your head will provide a quick energy boost.

Not exactly subtle, and the results, though immediate, tend to wear off sooner rather than later. Great just before a big meeting, but if you need help getting through the rest of your day, better try a walk.



MINUTE NAP

And if you keep it to 20 minutes, you won't enter a deep sleep, which is harder to shake off. Pro tip: Since coffee takes about half an hour to kick in and a power nap lasts 20 minutes, try drinking coffee and then immediately taking a nap. You'll wake up ready to go.

BUT...

We don't all work at Google, with its (in)famous nap pods, and many of us require significant powering-down time before being able to fall asleep.

With thanks to Dr. Bradley Anawalt, chief of medicine, University of Washington Medical Center, and Joel Harper, personal trainer at Joel Harper Fitness and author of Mind Your Body.

that it's going to take an increasingly larger amount of coffee to give you any kind of lift.)

And if you do all that, caffeine is fantastic. When your brain isn't expecting it, caffeine helps you focus and concentrate. It also increases your vigilance and might even improve your memory.

.....

With thanks to Gary Kamimori, Thomas Balkin, Nancy Wesensten, and Debra Yourick of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and Laura Juliano of American University.

Food Is Fuel. Consume Accordingly.

Consuming calories is the first step in creating energy. But what and how you eat determines whether the food revives or only sustains you.

RULES OF THUMB

- Smaller, more frequent meals are more conducive to creating physical and mental energy than three squares. Midmorning and afternoon snacks (nuts and dried fruit, grass-fed beef jerky) keep blood sugar steady.
- ➤ Your body burns through carbs fast, and you want to slow down that process so that your blood sugar's peaks and troughs are as flat as possible. Pair complex carbs, like whole-grain breads, sweet potatoes, and beans (all of which take a while to digest), with lean proteins, which will extend the process.
- will extend the process.
 No one kind of food is best for maximizing energy—instead, think about the relationship of one food to another, balancing your intake of carbs, proteins, and good fats. We asked chef and competitive cyclist Seamus Mullen, who transformed his diet to ease rheumatoid arthritis, to suggest a menu that optimizes energy levels and keeps your blood-sugar levels steady.



BREAKFAST

HAM-MUSHROOM-AND-ASPARAGUS OMELET

Why: It's the perfect combination of protein and low-glycemic-index vegetables.

- ▶ Beat **3 eggs** and set aside.
- ▶ Heat 1Tbsp butter over medium-high heat. When it foams, add 1 cup mixed chopped mushrooms and sauté for 1 minute. Add 3 asparagus stalks, cut into 1-inch pieces, and 2 slices natural ham, cut into strips. Sauté until the asparagus turns bright green, about 1 minute.
- Add the eggs. With a heatresistant rubber spatula, carefully fold in the edges of the omelet, tilting the pan to let the liquid egg fill in. Work around the perimeter. Once the eggs are nearly cooked, sprinkle with 1/4 cup finely grated cheddar.
- Slide omelet onto a plate while folding it over, making a half-moon shape.



LUNCH

KALE CHICKEN-CAESAR SALAD WITH QUINOA

Why: The mix of complex carbs, proteins, and good fats means steady blood sugar.

- Shred 1 cup roasted chicken.
- ▶ Prepare 1 cup mixed quinoa according to instructions on box.
- ➤ For the dressing, blend % cup white-wine vinegar,
 1 clove garlic, 2 good-quality anchovy fillets, 1 tsp Dijon mustard, 1 tsp raw honey,
 zest and juice of 1 lemon,
 2 stalks tarragon, and salt and pepper to taste. With the blender running on the lowest setting, drizzle in 1 cup olive oil.
- Combine chicken and quinoa and toss with 2 cups chopped kale, 1 avocado (cut into small pieces), 1 thinly sliced apple, a handful pecans, and 4 Tbsp dressing.



DINNER

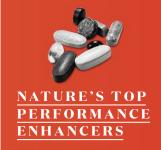
to taste.

STEAK WITH SAUTÉED CARROTS AND ONIONS WITH PINE-NUT CHIMICHURRI

Why: Tons of protein, not a ton of sugar.

- ➤ For the chimichurri, blend ½ bunch each cilantro, basil, and parsley, 1 clove garlic, ½ tsp red-pepper flakes, zest and juice of ½ lemon, ½ Tbsp cider vinegar, 1 cup olive oil, and salt and pepper
- ▶ Over high heat, sizzle 1
 Tbsp coconut oil. Add an
 8-oz hanger steak and sear until brown (2 minutes) on both sides. Remove steak from heat and let rest for 5 minutes.
- Sauté 5 baby carrots and 4 spring onions in 1 Tbsp butter until they soften.
- Season with salt, pepper, and a splash cider vinegar.
- Slice the steak, serve over vegetables, and top with **chimichurri** and **some pine nuts.**

With thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Mechanick, clinical professor of medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and Tara Linitz, registered dietician at Massachusetts General Hospital. Recipes by Seamus Mullen.



ASHWAGANDHA: An herb used for thousands of years in ancient Hindu healing traditions. It is a kind of adaptogen in that it both energizes the tired and calms the hyper—mostly through its support of the adrenal glands. It can also improve sports performance, the immune system, and sexual function.

COENZYME Q10: Found in every cell of your body, this substance helps make energy in the mitochondria (the power centers of your cells). Specifically, it aids in the production of ATP, a molecule that is the end product of nutrients being metabolized.

B VITAMINS: Of particular importance are B6, which helps regulate blood sugar and transport oxygen from red blood cells to the tissues, and B12, which helps build red blood cells and regulate the central nervous system.

With thanks to Dr. George Kessler, osteopath and alternative-medicine specialist in New York City.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54



ZERO CARB



The Overstimulated Man

Adventures in the energy drink/bar/gum aisle By ROSS McCAMMON

PRODUCT	FIRST IMPRESSION	IMMEDIATE EFFECTS	ONE HOUR LATER
KIND MAPLE-GLAZED PECAN & SEA SALT NUTS & SPICES BAR	The bar is made of nuts—including whole almonds and pecan bits—that are barely held together with some sort of sweet glue. Tons of fat, but not a ton of sugar. Problem is you want more than one. But 210 calories is way too many. Two of these and you have a meal—a meal of nuts, which is no meal at all.	Fine	Crashing
GATORADE COOL BLUE PRIME ENERGY CHEWS	A single serving of six gummy chews in a pack. Unidentifiable berry flavor. Chalky.	Nothing	Nothing
MONSTER ENERGY DRINK	Off-the-charts sweetness. Tastes like a blend of frosting, water, and extract of bubble gum. Feel immediately energized, almost certainly due to the sugar, which is the ingredient listed second. (There are two servings in a 16-ounce can.)	l just want some water.	Nothing
GU CHOCOLATE OUTRAGE ENERGY GEL	An absolute delight. Misnamed, though. It should be called Straight-Up Brownie Batter, because it's an absolute treat. Hard to say, though, where the energy's supposed to come from. Twenty milligrams of caffeine is not a lot of energy. Not much sugar, either. But what a snack.	I'm going to have another because, while I'm not feeling much of an effect, I would like seconds.	Fond memories
MEG CINNAMON MILITARY ENERGY GUM	This gum offers the rare combination of sugar and aspartame, and 100 milligrams of caffeine, which is considerable. It tastes like a Dentyne you discovered in your glove box and popped in your mouth anyway. Has a horrible aftertaste. A metallic crescendo of blech.	Feel great. A little shaky.	The effect has worn off. The aftertaste lin- gers. Will wash down with a GU Energy Gel.
HONEYCRISP APPLE	This relatively cheap fruit offers about 100 calories and natural sugar. Identifiable apple flavor.	Great	Still great. Because apples are great.

THE HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE HARITS OF HIGHLY ENERGETIC PEOPLE



OUESTLOV

Drummer, bandleader, producer, DJ, author, foodie, teacher. Up by: 9:30 A.M. Asleep by: 4:00 A.M.

doing something I want to do. That's what gives me en-ergy. I set the alarm for 7:00 A.M. and snooze till 9:30. Then my trainer comes over and we either run down 73 flights of stairs or box. After he kills me, I'm headed to work at 11:30. The next few hours are rehearsals or meetings, and at 4:30 they wash my hair and put on powder, and then I'm fully made up. (I just rest my head on the sink—that's how I take my nap.) We'll do the *Tonight Show,* and then from 7:00 P.M. to about 2:00,



ABC News chief anchor, co-anchor of Good Morning America, and host of This Week. Up by: 2:30 A.M. Asleep by: 8:30 P.M.

first thing, and that's a pret-ty powerful rest. I have yo-gurt and almonds for breakfast, plus an apple and some coffee. Doing the show definitely drains me, mix of strength training, bike, CrossFit, and yoga) and then have a pretty light ing or my workouts, I make sure to get some time alone,



THE ENERGY-ENHANCING OFFICE CHECKLIST

- An ergonomic chair will support and slightly arch your lower back so that you won't slump forward. Your arms should rest desk-high, creating a 90 degree angle at your elbows. Place your feet flat on the floor, and look straight at what you're working on.
- Standing desks and the like are great at energy expenditure, so it's bet-
- ter to stick with a standard sitting desk and try to get up and walk around for ten minutes for every hour you sit.
- Stack books beneath your monitor. This will help you look at eye level as you work, which improves posture naturally and helps with breathing. It also creates positivity.
- Twice a day, find a place where you decom-
- press for 15 minutes at a time. Your brain's default mode is daydreaming and mind-wandering. This is not counterproductive—it is restorative.
- Optimal work-place-performance temperature: 71 degrees.
 To the extent you can, make that your default.
- Decorate in white and bluegreen colors, which

- at least one study has associated with job performance and satisfaction.
- According to research, plants reduce stress and increase productivity. For spaces with low light: peace lilies and snake plants. For those with high or mostly artificial light: spider plants and philodendrons.

With thanks to Daniel Levitin, author of The Organized Mind.

The Five-Minute Fitness Recharge

Four exercises you can do anywhere—really: anywhere—when you need a quick pick-me-up

NOTE: Perform each exercise until your muscles burn like they're on fire, and then move on to the next one.

1. IMAGINARY CHAIR

- Position: Grab a pen and notepad. Put your back against a sturdy wall.
- Movement: Slowly walk your feet away from the wall and slide your back downward until your knees go above your ankles in a right angle. Keep your shoulders against the wall and your chin up. Have your arms bent and continue to hold your pen and notepad. Write down ten things you would like to get done. Each workout, add to the list, and then cross off what has been finished.

2. OBLIQUE

▶ **Position:** Lie on your left side, resting on your left forearm. Have your legs bent in a

right angle and your heels in line with your tailbone.

Movement: Press down on your left forearm to lift your knees off the ground. You will then be balancing on the outside of your left foot, too. Kick your right leg outward and upward, in line with your chin and tailbone. Bring your leg back in and drop your hips to the starting position. Resist leaning forward and keep your chest lifted. With each rep, count upward. Do as many as you can, and then switch sides and count back to zero.

3. DONKEY

- Position: Get on all fours. Ensure that your hands are beneath your shoulders and your knees beneath your hips.
- ▶ Movement: Lift your knees off the ground one inch and bounce one inch up and down in the air 25 times. Then lift your feet into the air, kicking them up while you balance on

your hands. Bring your feet back down for a controlled landing, using your knees and ankles as springs. Land softly, pretending the ground is a sheet of glass, so that you use your muscles and not your joints. Perform as many kicks as you can.

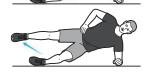
4. HIPPIE

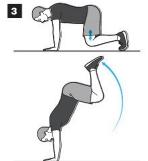
- ▶ **Position:** Stand with feet together, flat on the ground.
- Movement: Slowly bend forward at your waist while inching your hands down your legs as far as you can go without feeling uncomfortable. Alternate bending one knee while keeping the other leg straight (and your feet flat) as you let your head dangle downward to release tension. Stretch each side for at least 15 seconds. If one side is tighter, hold the position longer to create and maintain muscle balance.

With thanks to Joel Harper.











Additional thanks to Dr. Michael Joyner, physician-researcher at the Mayo Clinic and consultant to the National Institutes of Health and NASA, and Dr. Steven Kaplan, director of the Iris Cantor Men's Health Center at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.













The Best Damn Denim, Period

DIFFERENT BLENDS AND FINISHES MAKE FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF DENIM (WHICH MAKE FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF JEANS). SOME ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS. THESE ARE THREE OF THE BEST.



Pure cotton jeans can feel unforgiving, particularly in slimmer cuts, and the alternative are cotton blends woven with elastane and the like. This pair from Joe's is made primarily from cotton and modal, a semisynthetic material that is extremely soft, colorfast, and shrink-resistant.

Jeans (\$169) by Joe's Jeans; cotton blazer (\$795) by L.B.M. 1911; cotton T-shirt (\$68) by the Men's Store at Bloomingdale's; calfskin lace-ups (\$170) by Florsheim; leather belt (\$195) by Paul Smith.



This stuff is the Roth IRA of denim: You've heard it mentioned and you nod along, but you're not entirely sure what it's about. Selvage is the denim of choice for people who are serious about denim; the jeans usually are worn rolled up so that passersby can admire the neat, clean edges of the outseam.

Jeans (\$220) by Baldwin; leather jacket (\$995) by Theory; cotton shirt (\$145) by Alex Mill; leather cap-toe boots (\$400) by Wolverine 1000 Mile; leather belt (\$125) by Coach.



Waxed-denim jeans are treated with a thin layer of wax. At first, they have a slight shine, but over time and with wear, the coating fades and a matte finish develops, which contrasts with the woven texture beneath it. No two pairs of waxed-denim ieans are ever the same.

Jeans (\$165) by Nudie Jeans; cotton jacket (\$198) by J. Crew; cotton-and-linen pullover (\$128) by the Men's Store at Bloomingdale's; leather sneakers (\$85) by Vans.

How Blue Should You Go?

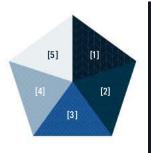
[1] The official color of serious and seriously stiff denim. For diehard denimheads

[2] What you should be wearing to work (if you wear jeans to work).

[3] Best worn on the weekend.

[4] Weekends only. And nothing too fitted.

[5] Best worn rarely and with great care.



THE EXPLAINER

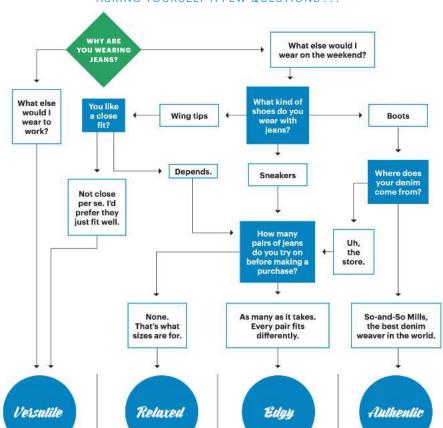
THE THING ABOUT SELVAGE

The reason it's so coveted (and pricey) is that it's woven on vintage shuttle looms that give it closed edges (hence the name, a contraction of "self edge") and myriad character-building imperfections in the weave. Most contemporary denim is made on projectile looms, so it lacks the historic authenticity and textured hand of selvage, and the looseness of its weave prevents it from molding to your body as easily. Selvage jeans break in with the wearer and become part of his identity—you need to work to make this stuff your own.





BEFORE YOU BUY YOUR NEXT PAIR, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER ASKING YOURSELF A FEW QUESTIONS . . .





Your ieans: Dark blue. slim fit, a little bit of stretch. Cotton-blend jeans (\$168) by AG Jeans; two-button cotton jacket (\$1,995) and cotton shirt (\$375) by Ermenegildo Zegna; calfskin laceups (\$475) by Polo Ralph Lauren; leather belt (\$195) by Paul Smith.



Your jeans: Medium blue, straight-leg fit, and faint distressing. Cotton-blend jeans (\$218) by Citizens of Humanity; cotton sweatshirt (\$98) by Todd Snyder + Champion; leather sneakers (\$135) by

Frank & Oak.



Your ieans: Medium blue, slim and tapered (okay, skinny) fit. Washed-denim jeans (\$770) by Dior Homme; leather jacket (\$3,995) by Bally; cotton T-shirt (\$33, pack of two) by Calvin Klein Underwear; leather boots (\$345) by Coach.



Your jeans: Inky selvage, with some give in the leg (just like the old days). Selvagedenim jeans (\$260) and cottón T-shirt (\$88) by Levi's Vintage Clothing; leather cap-toe boots (\$175) by Florsheim; leather belt (\$125) by Coach.

Ask Nick Sullivan

OUR FASHION DIRECTOR WILL NOW TAKE YOUR QUESTIONS



What is the genesis of the term "Canadian tuxedo"?

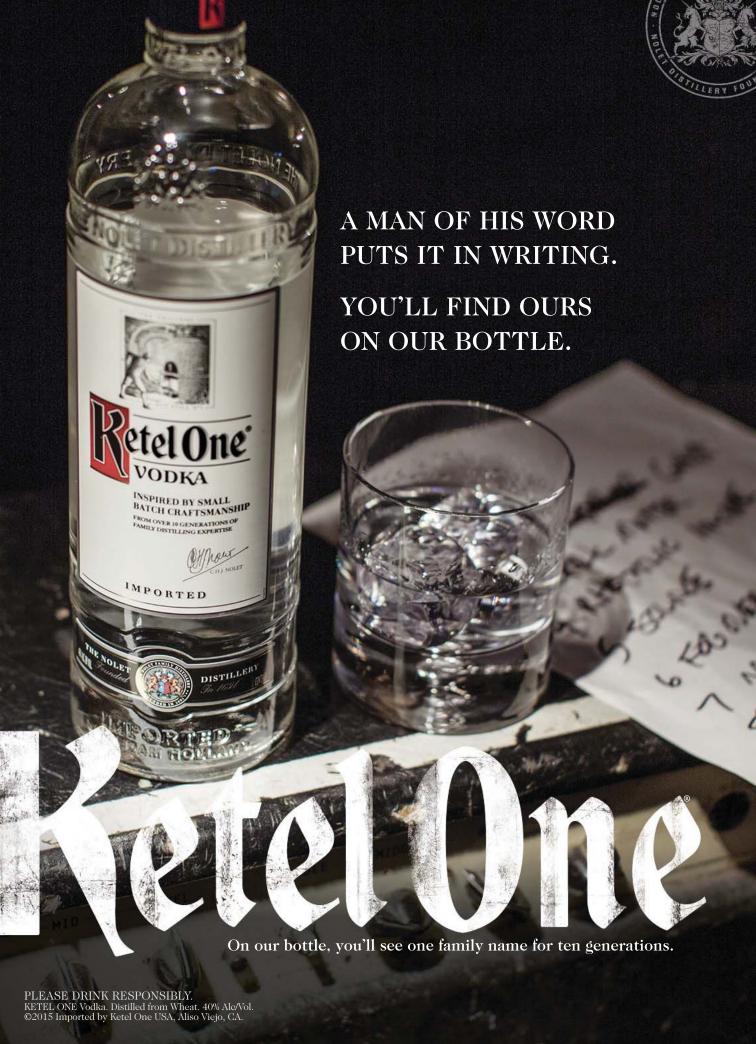
@MARC LEIBOWITZ

► Great story, hopefully true: Bing Crosby wore his favorite Levi's on a hunting trip in Canada in 1951. While okay for the backwoods, they were inappropriate for the fine Vancouver hotel in which he was staying, and he nearly got thrown out. Upon Crosby's return to the States, word of his ordeal got out and Levi's commissioned a one-off denim tuxedo jacket for him. Last year, Levi's re-created the famous Crosby tux for its Vintage Clothing line [Fig. 1, \$1,800].

My jeans always wear at the crotch. Why?

BERT WILLIAMS ST. PAUL, MINN.

Friction is to blame, with that critical meeting of four seams (rise, ass, and inseams) subject to more daily stress than any other part of the jeans. I suspect, too, that many denim finishing processes, particularly enzyme washes used to effect a worn-in look, actually weaken the cloth, inevitably shortening its life. (Think twice before purchasing such jeans.) To extend the life of any pair of jeans, wash them regularly and keep an eye out for thinning cloth in that area, which a tailor can address through reinforcement.



Buyer's Guide

SO YOU WANT A CERTAIN SHADE OF BLUE AND YOU HAVE A CERTAIN BUDGET ...



- AND HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT TO PAY? +

Ask Nick

Which shirts get tucked into jeans?

TOM NIGMAN, PIEDMONT, CALIF.

▶ I can't see you from here, Tom, but general rule: If it's knitted (sweater, polo shirt, T-shirt), no tuck; if it's woven (dress shirt, casual shirt), tuck.

THREE PROBLEMS, THREE SOLUTIONS



THE SAGGY ASS Solution: Try another type of fit in the same size.



THE SAGGY WAIST Solution: Go down a waist size, which will force you to wear them a little higher.



THE MOOSE KNUCKLE Solution: Different size, cut, and pants. Please.



HART SCHAFFNER MARX

MADE IN THE USA





Denim Redefined

THE LATEST CHAPTER IN THE STORY OF AMERICA'S MYTHIC CLOTHING

BY JOSHUA DAVID STEIN

There is no garment that history has a tighter or more tenacious grip on than a pair of blue jeans. They are America's myth pants, our man and manifest-destiny pants. They tell the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. And since 1890, when a Bavarian drygoods merchant in San Francisco named Levi Strauss and a Latvian tailor living in Reno, Nevada, named Jacob Davis constructed the first pair of Levi's 501's out of blue denim reinforced with copper rivets, "blue jeans" has been a byword for a sort of honest

day's work, a closeness to the land, to physical labor, to blood and bones and dust and grease. Unlike the airs of a blazer or the aspirational tourniquets of church clothing, blue jeans have never been about moving above one's station, and there has been an unwavering constancy to them.

Ask an aficionado what denim is and he'll recite in the quick, rote way a Catholic says a Hail Mary a version of the following: "Denim is a 13-and-three-quarter ounces, three-by-one, right-hand cotton







SAME IS NOT SEXY.

Introducing the all-new LG G Flex2. The smartphone for those who have their own way of looking at the world and vary the definition of sexy. With its uniquely curved design, 13 MP OIS+ camera, and Full HD P-OLED display, it's as beautiful to hold as it is to behold. Experience it for yourself and see how LG is redefining beauty and innovation.



#VARYSEXY





"IF LEVI STRAUSS AND JACOB DAVIS WERE HERE TODAY, THEY'D BE USING STRETCH, TOO."

twill, with indigo warp and undyed weft." And though today there seems something inevitable about blue jeans—like, what other color would they be?—they're actually the product of an uneasy chemical romance. Indigo, which has been used to dye cloth since as early as the third millennium B.C., actually can't stand cotton on a molecular level. It hates the thought of that yarn, so instead of dyeing the entire fiber, indigo penetrates only the outer ring, leaving the core naturally white. This naturally uneven dye, called a ring

dye, allows indigo-dyed jeans to record and remember every scuff, abrasion, scrape, crease, close call, night out, scramble, fall, and get up again.

Since the 1970s, when stonewashing was introduced, various dry abrasions and wet processes have allowed a pair of blue jeans to live a life far more rigorous than its owners ever could. This trend reached its apotheosis in the late 1990s, with brands like Replay and Diesel turning out baroque washes and dry abrasions. Even today, laundries scattered across the country specialize in beating the hell out of denim, a practice that raw-denim enthusiasts decry. "Predistressed denim is the stupidest shit I've ever heard of," says Brandon Svarc, the wunderkind behind Canadian company Naked & Famous. "It's not like you go to buy a Ferrari and the salesman points out the rust and you say, 'Wow, that's so wonderfully vintage!"" Scott Morrison, the handsome

graybeard king of denim and owner of 3x1, a denim atelier in SoHo, traffics principally in selvage, the high-priced, highly coveted denim fabric that's woven on a narrow type of loom, resulting in a hardier, more textured hand. Morrison, like many denim heads, believes selvage is the "gold standard," but even he notes the obvious: "Most people just don't have the interest or the time to wear a pair of raw-denim jeans for six months before they wash them."

The man responsible for moving Levi's beyond basic blue denim is Jonathan Cheung, the head of global design, whose goal over the past six years—like that of many innovators—is to make denim a more efficient storytelling medium. In jeans, that means being innovative with the fabric. A five-minute walk from Cheung's desk at the company's headquarters brings you to Eureka, Levi's innovation lab. This is where Levi's developed its Commuter jeans, launched in 2011, which exploit advances in yarn construction to deliver vintage-looking but secretly high-tech jeans, with stretch

fabric, water-resistant coating, and wicking properties. "It's been a very natural movement toward stretch," says Cheung, who brushes aside criticism that anything other than pure-cotton denim is a travesty. "We should uphold the value of Levi Strauss, not pickle it and preserve it." He explains: "If Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis were here today, they'd be using stretch, too." In other words, the future may be elastic, but in denim the guiding light has always been whatever works. (Stretch denim is often called performance denim, a

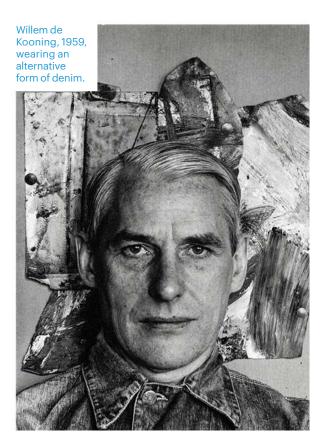
remnant, perhaps, of man's discomfort with seeking comfort. But what is *performance* but another word for *work?*)

Four hundred miles south, outside of Los Angeles, Samuel Ku, the president and creative director of AG Adriano Goldschmied, is perfecting his Denim 360, a new fabric for fall 2015 that has two-way stretch technology. AG Adriano Goldschmied has long been at the forefront of both wash and fabric innovation, pushing technologies like laser treatments and chemical washes beyond what smaller companies ever could achieve. In 2006, it was AG that veered away from the skinny raw-denim trend with its AG-ed vintage line. But now, says Ku, "Technology has moved to a place where you can have a stretch fabric with a vintage vibe. The innovation is under the hood."

"Authenticity is our key word," agrees Matt Baldwin, a tall, rugged Kansan who found-

ed Baldwin Denim in 2009 in Kansas City, Missouri. "It guides everything that we do. The market won't stand for contrivance." And though Baldwin works mostly with pure-cotton denim weaves, even he has taken to sourcing what's known as stretch selvage. Baldwin's newest style, the Steven, is a slightly boxy antifit jean with 2 percent stretch selvage from famed denim manufacturer Nisshinbo Mills. And for the past three years, Uniqlo, that blue elephant in the room, has been buying up capacity at selvage mills in China and Japan in order to manufacture its new stretch-selvage jeans. They go for \$50.

A traditionalist might be alarmed or disheartened to find his blue jeans elastic. But in its own way, denim has always been stretchy enough to fit each generation like a glove. Someday the obsession with authenticity will lessen. Today it's selvage. Tomorrow, who knows? But one thing that will never change is our impulse to tell our own stories. Only man can relate his own story. It's what separates us from beasts and keeps us wearing blue jeans. 18









MOISTURIZERS:

The Next Generation

BY RODNEY CUTLER

About half of all men in America use moisturizer on their face right now, and the other half are well aware, thankyouverymuch, that they really ought to try it. Now's a great time to start or switch up your routine: After decades of research devoted to women's skin, some of the greatest innovations in skin care are happening in the realm of the male mug. The skin on our faces is oilier, thicker, and harder to penetrate than women's, and the newest generation of moisturizers work to minimize wrinkling, sagging, et al. With all these new options come choices, and here are three factors to consider before choosing.



Skin Type

Do you have dry or oily skin? Check your face four hours af-

ter you wash it. If your nose and forehead are shiny, then you, my friend, have oily skin. Use a product that hydrates while absorbing excess oil. A safe bet is [1] Clinique for Men Oil Control Mattifying moisturizer (\$26; clinique.com), which has dimethicone, a polymer that hydrates skin while providing a matte finish. If you're the type whose face isn't shiny but is possibly even flaky four hours after washing, it's best to use a thicker lotion that traps in more moisture. [2] Dove Men+Care Ultra Hydrating cream (\$9; dovemencare.com) has an especially high amount of humectants, ingredients that pull in water from the dermis below to keep skin looking healthy and hydrated.



Weather

In the summer months, avoid anything heavy that

might make you feel clammy and weighted down-the skincare equivalent of wearing wool in July-and instead use something light that has an SPF of 30 or higher. [3] Anthony Oil Free facial lotion SPF 30 (\$33; anthony.com) provides the sun protection you need without suffocating your skin

or making you shine like Guy Fieri in a hot kitchen.



Aging

Proper hydration from an early agewhich comes both

internally (drink up!) and externally (oil up!)—means you shouldn't have to worry too much about wrinkles, blotches, or whatever the hell is happening on your uncle Larry's cheek. But even if you're older and already have wrinkles, antiaging lotions can still make your skin look younger and healthier. [4] Kiehl's Facial Fuel

Heavy Lifting antiaging moisturizer (\$40; kiehls.com) firms your skin with linseed extract and has salicylic acid, which removes dead skin cells, exposing healthier skin and smoothing out wrinkles. A lighter option is [5] Lab Series Age Rescue+ Water-Charged gel cream (\$50; labseries.com), which stimulates cell turnover and has the added benefit of being as refreshing and fast-drying as a splash of water.

With thanks to dermatologists Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank and Dr. Whitney Bowe.

Rodney Cutler is an Ironman triathlete and the owner of Cutler salons in New York City.

HOW TO MOISTURIZE. 'CAUSE YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG.

1. Cleanse your face. pat it dry, and apply moisturizer within

three minutes. 2. Don't cake it. A wasabi-pea's

amount of lotion is all you need. Too much can cloq your pores.

3. Gently rub it in with upward

motions.

4. Rub around your eyes with your ring fingers, so you go easier on the sensitive skin.

PROMOTION

FOR THE MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF FIT

the Ultimate SHIRT & TIE Collection

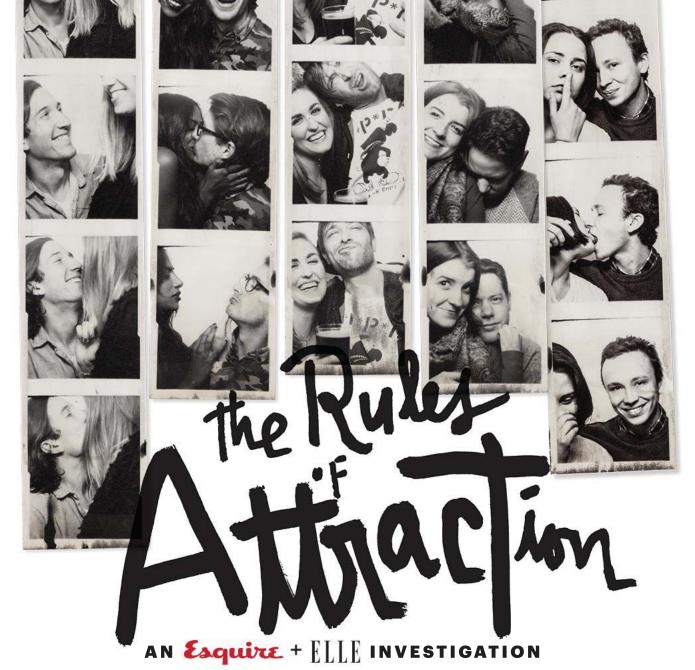
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MEN'S WEARHOUSE

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BY NATE HOPPER AND KEZIAH WEIR¹ ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES VICTORE

There have never been more experts with more theories about what might make two perfect strangers perfect for each other. But would finding a mate be easier if science took away the guesswork? To find out, we sent two eligible writers—one from ELLE, one from Esquire—on what might be the longest blind date in history. Three weeks, two dates, and extensive counseling with a psychologist, a bio-anthropologist, and a geneticist later, they found out just what it means to be compatible in the twenty-first century.

I. THE FIRST DATE

Nate: We start off with a hug. It's our first real meeting, our first actual date, and before we sit down at a snug two-top in a well-lit restaurant, she greets me at the door with a warm if tentative embrace. Now: I am not a natural-born hugger, at least not with people I don't know, and so the hug took me by surprise. Not that it should have. How else are you supposed to say hello to someone who in a few hours will know more about you than you've told most of your friends and blood relatives?

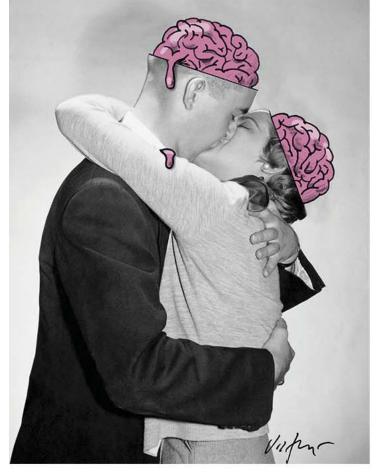
That was the plan for the night: Our respective editors set us up on a blind date (or what would come to seem like one very long threeweek blind date) to see just how compatible we might be with each other and to learn what compatibility even means in the age of Tin-

der and "Instant Chemistry" genetic testing, and we figured we might as well take the time to get to know each other. For our first outing, we would sit across from each other and ask and answer a list of thirty-six increasingly personal questions that had been devised by psychologists to foster closeness between perfect strangers like us. Weeks before, the questionnaire had been popularized by a *New York Times* column—published as Valentine's Day and its chocolate sirens hurtled toward the lonely—under the title "To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This." The author falls for someone she knew a little from

¹NATE: Shouldn't her name come before mine? Ladies first and all?

² KEZIAH: What was your plan of seduction—a handshake? We all know that hugs promote the release of oxytocin, and a study out of Bonn University shows that a hit of oxytocin in men stimulates heightened attraction to their partner and decreased attraction toward other women.





³ KEZIAH: Basically a calculated version of how you're supposed to talk to your wouldbe murderer in the hope of instilling the notion that you're a real human being with thoughts and feelings and should be spared. See: the grandmother in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find."

⁴**KEZIAH:** Nate made me smile. My cheeks hurt from smiling.

⁵**KEZIAH:** Nate, no one was stopping you. The bar table was small. Our knees were close.

⁶NATE: Meaning: shortish, which, according to some research, means I'll be less attractive to women. (One Dutch study from 2013 found that women are most satisfied with men eight inches taller than them.) Due to something called assortative mating, though, most of us tend to end up with people who are of a height similar to ours.

⁷**NATE:** A small part of me thinks this is an insult. That small part of me is a prick.

work and the climbing gym; the questions, which they went through on their first outing, enabled an "accelerated intimacy" because they forced people to "bother to know someone," which would systematically "generate trust." ³

I told Keziah we shouldn't do them. At least not during dinner. Though that was mostly a ploy to schedule after-dinner drinks. So we ate and meandered instead through normal first-date talk-the kind that most people lament but I actually enjoy. The conversation never stalled, we laughed constantly, and she made fun of my fidgeting with the millions of forks only once (and did so kindly, as a way of relating, since her father does the same thing). She doesn't wear much makeup, because she's pretty and she doesn't seem to need to, and the more I looked at her, the more I liked looking at her, noticing how her cheeks gently swelled as she smiled.4 Also, I had (silently) noted as we walked to the table that she had a nice ass. I know that's uncouth. Oh, well. I was having fun, and this first impression of her, at least after two hours of boozy banter, was a good one.

At the bar afterward, being a romantic, I suggested we do some shots. We received generous tequila pours. Then we waded into the thirty-six questions. They didn't pry much at the beginning ("Whom would you want as a dinner guest?" and "Would you like to be famous?"), but by the end they instruct you to ask your partner for advice on a per-

sonal problem, and expose your worst fears ("Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing?"). It took hours, and I learned so much about her—none of which I disliked. There were moments when I looked at her, my old-fashioned dwin-



dling, and thought about whether I would try to kiss her later—and yet...

Well, I didn't want to. But not because of her. I'll try to explain:

This wasn't intimacy. This was a script. Not just any script-a script of questions so personal that they vacuumed away all the wonderful mystery about her. I didn't want to know her opinion of her family already. I didn't want to know her worst memory already. I didn't even want to know five things she liked about me already. I was learning things that, by being revealed so clinically, snuffed out my curiosity about them and the chance to know how she would, over time, choose to tell me them. You learn something essential about a person not just through who they are but through how and when they tell you who they are. (And by figuring each other out, sneaking looks into each other's eyes and touches on each other's legs.5) And until then, if you care, you fear-or, rather, hope-that you're proving yourself worthy of hearing. You know: worthy of trust. The kind generated by what you want to say instead of what you're instructed to. I realized at the end of the questions that I would never know what she would've told me

freely had she actually come to trust me, and that gave me pause. I didn't kiss her. We hugged again, this time goodbye.

II. THE SHRINK

Keziah: Sitting across from psychologist Ty Tashiro, author of *The Science of Happily Ever After* and reigning king of romantic compatibility, I feel a little queasy. This is likely some combination of last night's double tequila shot and the fact that twenty-four hours after our first date, I'm in couples therapy with a guy who knows more about me than my last long-term boyfriend did—knows, for instance, what I'd most regret not having told someone were I suddenly to die. I glance over at Nate. His shoes are nice. He's clean-cut in a cool way; Tom Cruise-esque in stature; and his eyes, which are almost gray, crinkle sweetly when he smiles. My parents would love him.

Because we're trying to build a relationship rather than fix a broken one, Tashiro is giving us the premarital treatment, which is kind of his sweet spot—*Happily Ever After* details how to make scien-

tifically informed decisions on the hunt for Mr. or Mrs. Forever through a blend of real-life anecdotes and hard psychology; one chapter begins with a glimpse into a couple's new relationship and slides seamlessly into an analysis of why we so often ignore early warning signs, citing studies from Purdue University, the Gottman Institute, and Harvard that explain our often optimistic blindness. Interestingly, another study shows that premarital therapy can cut the likelihood of divorce by a third, while yet another finds that 25 percent of married couples who start seeing a counselor report feeling worse about their partnership than they did pretherapy. In theory, it's easier to strengthen something before cracks appear than to mend it after. We're ahead of the game. Way ahead of it.







First up on the docket: Disclose our relationship histories. Tashiro is a firm believer in divulging secrets before making any commitment, whether you're moving in together or just getting a dog. "The truth has a way of manifesting itself inevitably," he tells us. So we run through our romantic backstories—my

tendency to tumble into prolonged semirelationships with commitmentphobes, Nate's to move glacially for fear of hurting the people he's with or being hurt himself. Next we fill out questionnaires about the traits that we'd like in an ideal partner—everything from race to religious beliefs to intelligence level. Because fate loves a good joke, the first question is about height. I'm five-seven, gravitating toward shoes that allow me to tower, and dudes who tower over me. In the spirit of honesty, I select the five-ten to six-foot category, which overshoots Nate. The rest of the page is similarly specific—would you like your date to be slightly mean, slightly kind, moderately kind, or extremely kind? Should their intelligence level be dull, average, bright, or very bright? As I finish selecting my answers, I glance over at Nate and realize that I'd like to be the kind of person who measures up to his ideals.



And when Tashiro compares our answers, he tells us, optimistically, that we want the same things. We could've both felt strongly about religion (but had opposing beliefs) or political leanings, but instead, intelligence, kindness, and attractiveness rank highest in importance for both of us. We're even looking for the same levels of each: moderately kind, very bright, and about an eightieth percentile in attractiveness. Actually, Nate's looking for anywhere from a six to an eight. So this holds up as long as

BNATE: This is basically what my mom and grandmother have told me my whole life, which is "The truth always comes out." Which is why I would've talked about all of this stuff... eventually.

9 **NATE:** Hm. This maybe overstates it.

¹⁰ **NATE:** For the record: I'm five-eight.

we both think the other person is intelligent, attractive, and kind. For his part, Tashiro thinks we are both all of these things. And I think I can at least pass for a solid seven.

Finally, we have to verbalize the relationship we're looking for. Nate is crystal clear on this one: He wants a casual, one-or-two-dates-a-week situation with little communication in the interim, but insists upon monogamy. Conveniently, this is what I want to want, though my track record says otherwise: When I'm dating someone and his interest seems to cool, my play-to-win instincts kick in regardless of whether I actually like the guy.

But there's a strange comfort in hearing Nate's expectations. Theoretically, I know exactly what I'm in for. If he schedules a date, it's because he wants to. If I don't hear from him for a few days, it's because he's saving his stories for when we meet in person. And if he can spell out his wants, so can I; it's liberating to smother my self-consciousness and allow myself to voice—for once—that I might actually want to communicate with the object of my affection, like, daily.

Tashiro assures us that our conflicting needs are relatively minor and definitely surmountable given our intense compatibility in other areas, and this assurance in itself is one of the major draws of couples counseling—an expert reminding you to notice all the good things about the relationship instead of getting mired in the bad. Throughout the hour and a half, I find myself liking that Nate has already told me many of the personal details he's now sharing with Tashiro, and that he has heard many of mine. I know him, I think. And, pleasantly, surprisingly, I want to know more.

III. THE SECOND DATE

Nate: We went out again, this time to Chelsea Piers Sports Center, where I found myself up forty-five feet above the ground, a harness hugging my crotch, my arms throbbing, hyperaware of my grunting, a pouch of chalk tied around my waist, a professional stunt double yelling instructions from the padded floor below, all as pictures of my gracelessness were being taken. We were rock climbing, in case you couldn't guess. (Studies have shown that there is something about enduring danger together that can bring a man and a woman closer. In one study, men's attraction to an attractive female interviewer was measured as they stood on two different kinds of bridges: one prone to swaying, situated high above shallow waters; the other much sturdier, only ten feet above the water. The study found the men to be far more attracted to the woman—to bring up sex in their survey responses, to call her after the study for more information—when

The Theory of ATTRACTION

A BRIEF HISTORY

Old Testament

"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose."

—Genesis 6:2

Ancient Greece

The thinking was that humans originally had four hands, four feet, and two faces, and fearful of their strength, Zeus decided to cut them in half. Humans then roamed the earth seeking their other half.

Medieval Europe

The era of courtly love and high-drama, high-risk romance. Characterized by later historians as a "delightful disease." love came to assume quasi-divine undertones.

11 KEZIAH: After a week of waiting for Nate to man up and ask me out again, he finally explained this reasoning. And, in keeping with science, this made me want him to want me more. A study last year in Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin found that men view "responsive" women-those who "support important aspects of their self-concept" and are "willing to invest resources in the relationship"—to be more attractive than their apathetic peers: women, though, found "responsive" guys to be less desirable. I should've dropped my plans like a good manic pixie dream girl. Nate did exactly what he was supposed to.

¹²**NATE:** I found the self-conscious way she did it kind of sweet.

¹³ **NATE:** No comment.

¹⁴ **NATE:** [Comment redacted —Editor]

they were scared.) The heights didn't make me more attracted to Keziah or stir any dormant animalism in me or trick me into thinking it was my last chance to have sex before I plummeted to my death. We were just having fun, and as much as I enjoyed watching her move, I preferred the view from across the table, over drinks.

The following week, my (planned) spontaneous text to her about Valentine's Day was foiled by her texting me before I texted her, then her having plans when I suggested we go out that night, then my getting a cold that kept me from the "boozy brunch" she suggested for the day after. And by the time I got better—with the burden of instigating the next date on me—I had spent so much time thinking about our date that spending more time thinking about a date while on a date didn't feel appealing. 1 Even the best-laid plans can't control for timing.

IV. THE SPIT TEST

Keziah: Sometimes when you're looking for love, you find yourself spitting daintily into a test tube next to your most recent blind date. The tube's part of a kit from Instant Chemistry, a Toronto-based biotech start-up that specializes in analyzing the genetic, emotional, and psychological compatibility between partners. If Nate has ever felt an ounce

of attraction toward me, watching me drool into the vessel's small opening will certainly eradicate any such feelings. 12

We cap our "samples," releasing a watery blue fluid to mix with the saliva, and drop them into the biohazard-material bags in which they'll travel back to Canada for analysis. According to Instant Chemistry's Web site, "Analysis of the genetic makeup of two individuals can help determine whether two individuals will experience physical attraction and compatibility when they meet for the first time." The company has teamed up with dating Web sites in the hopes of more fine-tuned matchmaking, and markets the kit as a novelty for existing couples. It costs \$199, but we got ours half off—Valentine's Day special!

Genetic testing for compatibility is a relatively recent scientific pursuit. The earliest study is the oft-cited 1995 experiment in which women smelled a collection of various men's shirts, then picked the shirt whose smell they were least disgusted by—overwhelmingly, they chose the shirts of men whose set of human leukocyte antigen genes (the ones that help determine immunity) were most different from their own. The upshot: Opposites really do attract! Except, of course, when they don't. A study published last year in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found that, statistically, spouses share more genetic similarities than random pairings do. This finding is totally counterintuitive given, um, incest,



A week later, we get e-mails from the Instant Chemistry bot: "Hooray, your results are in!" And hooray it is, because the science says that Nate and I are actually very compatible. Given the diversity of our HLA genes, it's likely that we would make good, tough babies, since, as the site romantically puts it, "it is thought that the high diversity of HLA genes in humans increases the chances that at least some people will survive a pandemic. This increases the likelihood of survival of the human race." Boom. I pause at a section describing our dopamine receptors—they're the fun ones that influence happiness and lust. Nate, the site goes on to say, is part of the 30 percent of the population possessing what's called 7R+, a gene that's shown to make people bigger risk takers and, wait for it, "better lovers." 14 Hm. I read on and learn that we're pretty much as perfect a match as you can get for immunity purposes and neurogenetic affinity. Our genes are perfect for each other. Or, as Nate shoots over in an e-mail, "Oh, look, our spit is compatible, too!" Maybe we should've kissed at the end of the first night. Just for, you know, research.

V. THE HORMONE CHECK

Nate: Helen Fisher is a biological anthropologist who works as a senior research fellow at the Kinsey Institute and as the chief scientific advisor for Match.com. She is also the kind of scientist who volunteers stories about her own sex life (if you swear yourself to secrecy) and repeats lines that could be catchphrases, like "You

"Metaphysics of Sexual Love," Arthur Schopenhauer, 1844 "Every kind of love, however ethereal it may seem to be, springs entirely from the instinct of sex...." The Descent of Man, Charles Darwin, 1871 Two men, each looking for a mate to pass down their genetic material, compete for one woman. The woman chooses the winner.

The Interpretation
of Dreams, Sigmund
Freud, 1899
Men marry their mother. Women marry their father. Neuroses
ensue.

The Woman Rebel,
Margaret Sanger, 1914
The beginning of the campaign
for birth control. By 1960, the Pill
is approved and a woman's desire
can finally trump family planning.







learn a lot between the sheets."

Over her years of scientific study, Fisher has created a questionnaire that has guided millions of people to search four

biological constellations of their minds in hopes of locating what kind of person they can connect with. Each section of the questionnaire addresses a different neurochemical and asks the user to react (favorably or negatively) to certain statements. There's dopamine, which relates to one's optimism, spontaneity ("I am always looking for new experiences" was one of the prompts), and enthusiasm; serotonin, which leads to orderliness and docility ("It is important to respect authority"); testosterone, which indicates competitiveness and tough-mindedness

("Debating is a good way to match my wits with others"); and estrogen, a window into whether we are caring and sympathetic ("I am very sensitive to people's feelings and needs") and imaginative. In comparing how two people respond to the questions, Fisher believes, she can get a good read on how well their brain chemistries align.

We both submitted our responses to Fisher, and about a week later she went through her analysis. We both rated high in dopamine, so our breadth of fascinations and excitement-seeking could keep us surprised by and beside the other for years. For serotonin, we both had a strange mix of respect and irreverence for the rules; Fisher said that neither would really bother the other. I scored high on testosterone-and she scored fairly high as well, so we could debate and converse. She scored high on estrogen-and I scored fairly high as well, something Fisher said was uncommon for a man but would keep us close, since each would care about the other's emotions. 15

All corners of our brains seemed perfectly compatible. Again. Exceptionally so. But as Fisher explained, neurochemical alignment is hardly ever enough to sustain a relationship; instead, it's merely a tool that a couple can use to navigate the inevitable difficulties. (For instance: If two people share the dopaminergic desire for adventure but constantly clash because of gaps in their serotonin and estrogen traits, they can use that awareness to know that when they clash they should return to their shared dopaminergic joys in order to move forward with one another. It's not sharing everything that's importantit's sharing something.) Though her questionnaire could steer a person toward "fewer frogs," its best use wasn't necessarily matchmaking. "Anybody who

15 KEZIAH: This was all cool to learn, but from the time I'd spent with Nate I already knew he was a good conversationalist, that he cared about people's feelings.

more than all the tests, the dates, and the expert opinions combined, gave me that little heart flutter I'd been craving.

tells you they know perfect matching, they're fools-or ignorant," she said. "One or the other."

I asked Fisher, then, how much of a role our biology plays in falling for someone, and she echoed something Tashiro had said in our last meeting with him. He had said, "The science will only explain half of what occurs. The rest is

So You Think YOU HAVE A TYPE?

MAYBEIT'S REDHEADS who work in fashion and listen to EDM. Or, as a friend of mine recently confided, curvy girls with beautiful hands...who love hummus. (He's Israeli.) Sometimes having a "type" is a way to select-or reject-potential mates. Sometimes it's a reflection of how you want to be perceived. The bottom line? Types don't matter. They have no bearing on who you'll end up with. Or even who you'll hook

'There's a lot of data saying that people are really bad at telling you what they want," says developmen-

up with.

tal psychologist Sarah Merrill, whose latest romantic-connection study found that half the participants copped to having a type. This group was more likely to have had a serious relationship in high school, but oddly enough that first love didn't necessarily fit their declared type. Nor did their recent partners.

When gerontologist Karl Pillemer of Cornell interviewed seven hundred people over age sixty-five for his book 30 Lessons for Loving, he found that almost none reported having had a specific type in mind before meeting their long-

term mate, though many did know what kind of relationship they wanted. "It was surprising how many made actual lists," he says.

This lines up rather neatly with the advice offered by He's Just Not Your Type author Andrea Syrtash. "We get so stubborn, we don't realize our preferences are fluid," she says. Her age-old advice: Focus on the values you're seeking rather than the surface specs. Instead of zeroing in on bankers. for example, recognize that you want someone driven. "Even chemistry can sneak up on you," she says.

-MOLLY LANGMUIR

magic. It pains researchers to say that, but it's just the truth."

As we talked and laughed with Fisher on speakerphone, I started writing jokey notes to Keziah, and we quietly exchanged them throughout the hour, stifling our laughter to keep it our secret.16 I didn't want to leave the room.

VI. NOW WHAT?

Keziah: At the end of the experiment, my relationship with Nate feels not unlike one monthlong missed connection. He's charming and attractive, science says that we're perfect for each other, and yet...we still can't seem to give the thing wings. Because not even science could mimic that awful, wonderful buzz of early uncertainty-is he going to call, is she going to say yes? Maybe that's the last 10 percent of the love equation: the spark. Instead of excitement, Nate and I were saddled with the worst parts of marriage starting on date one-knowing too much about the other

> person-but without the shared experience and investment that add up to intimacy. Not that the setup was a failure. After hours of discussions and personality tests and emotional evaluations, I have a pretty good idea of what kind of person I'd like to be with, and the kind of relationship I'd like it to be. And, ironically, the faceless ideal has started to look a lot like Nate.

> At the end of our last counseling session, I jokingly suggested that we check in twenty years from now; if neither of us is married, perhaps we should give it a whirl. Maybe then we'll have worked the craving for irrational lust and painful anxiety out of our systems.

> Nate: I guess that, like anything that lives and breathes, a relationship will start to suffocate if you trap it in a test tube, and all this compatibility testing and couples counseling, the certainty of which is ostensibly appealing to some people, only deprived us—or at least me—of the mysteries and fears that fuel the early days of any relationship. So what now? I've gone out for drinks with other people. So has she. We'll probably go out again together soon without any special or clinical expectation, and whether it works out, whether she and I actually become a we-well, that's the fun part. 12



The authors, below. Of all

the prospective couples who

stepped into our photo booth at a Brooklyn bar back

in March, they were the ones

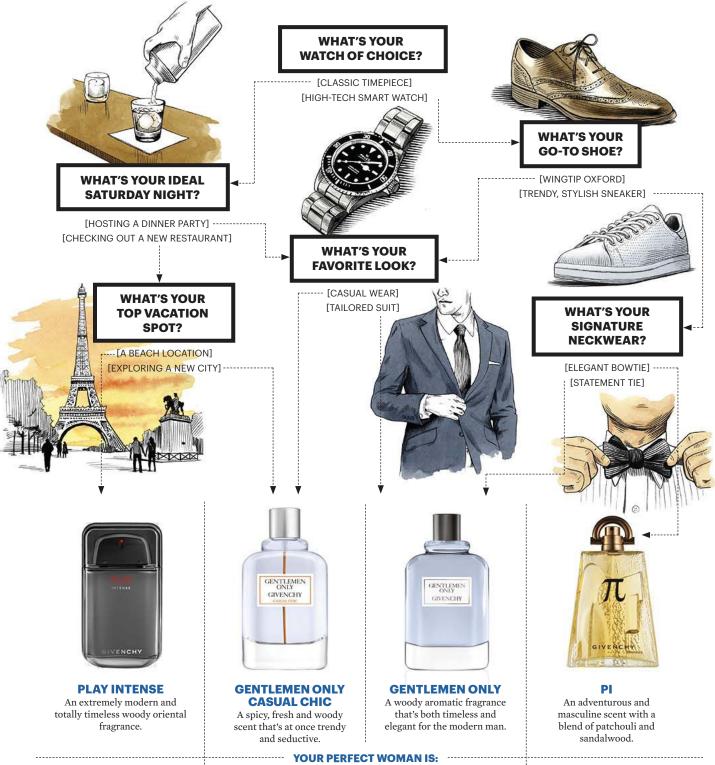
with the most...chemistry.



16 **KEZIAH:** This hour,

YOUR PERFECT FIT

FOLLOW THE FRAGRANCE MAP TO FIND THE GIVENCHY SCENT THAT'S YOUR PERFECT FIT



ANGE OU DEMON LE SECRET

She's radiant, fresh and sparkling.



VERY IRRÉSISTIBLE EAU DE TOILETTE She's fresh, sparkling and elegant.



VERY IRRÉSISTIBLE EAU DE PARFUM

She's sensual, sophisticated and seductive.



DAHLIA DIVIN

She's an elegant, sophisticated goddess.



Cartier

CALIBRE DE CARTIER DIVER

WATER-RESISTANT TO 300 METERS, THE CALIBRE DE CARTIER DIVER WATCH IS AN AUTHENTIC DIVING WATCH. FITTED WITH THE 1904 MC MOVEMENT, IT COMBINES THE HIGH TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE ISO 6425: 1996 STANDARD WITH THE ASSERTIVE AESTHETICS OF THE CALIBRE DE CARTIER WATCH. ESTABLISHED IN 1847, CARTIER CREATES EXCEPTIONAL WATCHES THAT COMBINE DARING DESIGN AND WATCHMAKING SAVOIR-FAIRE.







Charlize Theron has bronchitis.

This is not the second coming of Sinatra and Talese and 1966, however, not least because Charlize Theron is no overcompensating Hoboken warbler, all due respect. Theron is more the quiet warrior, a dewy goddess with a hacking cough. She's done the antibiotics; now she's going to sweat out the rest of it in the very last row of a packed yoga class in West Hollywood. Her mat sits close to the back wall and near the window; her entourage, which consists of her mother and me, have their mats on either side of her.

The Therons are twice-weekly regulars at this morning class, sixty or seventy devotees led by Vinnie Marino, a man *The New York Times* once called the Yoga King of Los Angeles. Vinnie's walking all the way from the front of the room to the back to size up the New Jersey jackass in gleaming new sweatpants, a Happy Dog T-shirt, and socks.

"Scott, this is Vinnie, our teacher," says Charlize. She's all in black

and long of tapered limb. She looks, for all intents and purposes, just like Charlize Theron, bombshell luscious, but bigger, very close. I can hardly drink her all in without gawking. This happened to me once before, with Jeff Goldblum, also very tall and quite an eyeful, but there was a table between us, and he was more fully clothed.

"Hiiii?" Vinnie asks. There are far less friendly ways to inquire as to why I'm taking up space here. He has a New York City accent and I hear pain in his voice. I see pain in his grin. My pain.

Be gentle, please, I say.

"Do you have sixteen towels?" he asks.

No, but this is a new headband.

"You'll be fine," he says. "You're a happy dog."

Vinnie walks back up to begin class.

"I always tell myself I'm never coming back," Charlize whispers. Gerta, more compact than her daughter, and more muscular,



looks me square in the eyes.

"I'm going to say it," she says. "You should be terrified." Nah. Mortified.

Vinnie's bells tinkle. I try. Honest I do—briefly, intermittently—but this is no beginner's class, and mine body is an instrument trained for one pose: sitting.

I can grunt. I can thud. I have an excellent new headband. But I can't do any of this stuff.

Vinnie spots this right away.

"Take breaks," he says. "I have no medical training."

"Don't do anything you can't handle," Charlize whispers. "I need you for the rest of the day. You can also just sit."

Yes I can, while Charlize and Gerta, supple and strong, handle every bit of it. Charlize trained for ballet from age four until her knees broke down in her late teens; at thirty-nine, she still coils and



uncoils with an athlete's grace. But it's really Gerta's show. She's my age, sixty-two, and holding a horizontal handstand—the Crow, I think—for I don't know how long. Palms spread, arms steely, steady as a rock. She might or might not be grunting; she's on the far side of Charlize, whose hacking and whimpering are occasionally audible between the sweeping, swelling chords on Vinnie's playlist.

"Oh, my God," she moans after releasing from what I believe to be a Dolphin Plank. "I'm going to cry."

She doesn't cry, of course.

"So after we do these two backbends," Vinnie tells the class, "I'm gonna have my friend Scott from Jersey teach a few of the poses."

There is general laughter. At last it has arrived: the precise moment to finally remove my socks in preparation for demonstrating the Stubborn Fungus.

Charlize Theron, my hero, my pal, steps in and sets things right.

"Vinnie, you're such an asshole," she half-snarls, half-joking. "Stop being an asshole."

Vinnie's cool. Charlize and Gerta, too. Sinatra, though—now there was an asshole.

It's not a matter of full disclosure—we're in Hollywood, not Mosul or Donetsk—but it's worth noting that Charlize Theron and Sean Penn are in love, and Sean and I have known each other a long time, and I had asked him to put in a good word for me with Charlize, and he did, and at lunch she asks me to text him a photo from yoga class—"You might be able to get even Sean to go"—and I do, a shot of my face, cockeyed and wretched, above the words "Do not EVER try yoga."

The sushi joint, on the second floor of one of the faceless, endless, countless strip malls lining Sunset Boulevard from La Cienega to infinity, turns out to be great. And I'm sorry: I know that a yoga class followed by a Sean Penn name drop followed by a great sushi lunch adds up to I'm a hack. A whore. A starfucker. True all of that—so was and is Talese sometimes—but utterly beside the point: The fish here is terrific.

"You don't order," says Charlize. "They do it. It's a standard thing."

I saw the warning sign out front: NO TAKEOUT... NO SPICY TUNA ROLL... NO TEMPURA.

"That's the sign of a really good place. 'We're not gonna let you fuck this up. We're gonna make this great for you. You're welcome. Just shut up and eat.' It's only what's fresh, so it changes. You'll never come here and have the same thing. My office is just down the road, and both of my producing partners love this place, so this is where we have more business meetings than anywhere."

The slow parade starts with halibut on the left, snapper on the right, and proceeds plate by small plate. *Omakase:* chef's choice.

"Butter," she murmurs. "Butterbutterbutter. That you can pack that much flavor in a bite is ridiculous."

She seems happy, even with the hacking cough. Why not? She has a son who just turned three, a summer blockbuster on the way. Yoga's over. The albino salmon is here. Albacore. Unagi. Toro. The little plates keep marching, two by two.

Quite a lunch, Charlize.

She cackles.

"I get a real enjoyment out of food. That's why I have to work out four times a week—because I really like to eat."

Not that I was staring at yoga or anything, but you're very ... fit. "You saw my mom. My mom was a gymnast and an athlete—

I grew up with that."

She grew up an only child on a dirt farm in South Africa, thirty miles east of Johannesburg, near Benoni, a city of 200,000. Her folks ran a construction business; little Charlize ran free.

"I don't even remember how old I was when I knew how to drive. I had one of those little—what do they call them? tuk-tuks in Malaysia-they're like motorcycle engines, but they're built like little trucks, with a bed and everything. My dad was a mechanic and he built up one of those, and I think I had that from the time that I was eight. I would drive that everywhere. I would load all the dogs and take them down to the lake."

How many dogs?

"A ton of dogs. My mom brought everything home-dogs, cats, birds."

Movies?

"Yeah. I loved watching movies. Escapism, stories that you could lose yourself in-I loved that. I loved stories. And it's Africa. You grow up on mythology. You sit, you hear stories."

What did I just eat-that orange stuff?

"Uni."

Urchin.

"Urchin, yeah. A lot of people don't like the texture."

Gaggy. But it tastes like pure nature.

"Ocean-deep ocean. It tastes like you're diving into a wave. I love it."

The waiter comes by to ask if we'd like anything else.

"I'm so happy," she tells him. "Thank you."

I leave \$65 on the \$218 tab and ask her if that's sufficient.

"Oh, my God. That's really generous. Now they're going to think I'm a complete asshole. Thanks for that, Scott. They'd better treat me like a princess next time."

Charlize, you are a princess. Yoga and sushi? That's a helluva day right there.

"I felt like I was letting you down, because I don't do anything. We could've gone grocery shopping. Are you catching a ride with me?"

Theron is on the level sweet.

She's happy to be out and about—she was sick in bed all weekend happy to be back at the office, where everyone's happy to see her back on her feet, glad to sit with me and talk. It's a sunny suite in a Sunset Boulevard office tower, home to her production company and her Africa Outreach Project, focused on AIDS/HIV education and prevention. She's formidable, too-smart, self-aware, tough in the clinches. In the wake of the Sony hack sewage, she insisted on a paycheck equal to her costar's on The Huntsman. And in the years-long making of Mad Max: Fury Road, she and Mad Tom Hardy mixed it up a bit.

"We fuckin' went at it, yeah. And on other days, he and George [Miller, the director] went at it. It was the isolation, and the fact that we were stuck in a rig for the entire shoot. We shot a war movie on a moving truck-there's very little green screen. It was like a family road trip that just never went anywhere. We never got anywhere. We just drove. We drove into nothingness, and that was maddening sometimes. And it's material that's really frightening—we didn't have a script. Tom and I are actors who take our jobs seriously. Both of us want to please the directors we work with, and when you don't know if you can deliver on that, it's a frightening place to be—and for Tom more than me, because he was stepping into big shoes."

She's quiet for a little while, save for the hacking cough.

"I'd rather have that honesty working with someone than someone who fake-smiles through something-especially for actors, when your job is to go for the emotional truth. When you're with somebody and you don't feel like you're in their emotional truth, then you don't

"Sean liked to have conversations outside of just making movies. That's sometimes hard to find

trust them. I think good actors go all the way. If you want to be a safe actor, and you emotionally protect yourself from things getting out of hand, the performance will show all of that.

"Anyone who really, really, really goes into the deep dark corners of what emotional truth is, as somebody who works opposite of that, you have to be grateful for that. I beg for that. I beg for that on a job, that potency to the stew that makes it that magic that it is."

She leaves for a minute and comes back with a self-portrait Hardy painted and left in her trailer as a wrap gift, with a red handprint on the back and an inscription:

"You are an absolute nightmare, BUT you are also fucking awesome. I'll kind of miss you. Love, Tommy."

"We drove each other crazy, but I think we have respect for each other, and that's the difference. This is the kind of stuff that nobody wants to understand—there's a real beauty to that kind of relationship."

Her career is pure stardust.

She was a teenage model in Italy, came to New York City at eighteen, and left for Los Angeles when her knees gave out for good; there she was discovered by her first manager, who was in line at the bank where she was trying-loudly and without success-to cash her last New York modeling-job check to keep her room at the Farmer's Daughter, formerly an L. A. fleabag. But Theron came up hard in a hard country, on a hard continent.

"On the street where I was raised-75 percent of the people who lived on that street are not alive anymore. For no reason. For nothing. Life means nothing. In my formative years, I was in an environment that was filled with turmoil—political turmoil—in a world that was incredibly unsafe. And still is. In the early nineties, we were number one in homicide in the world. In HIV/AIDS, we're still number one. We were number one in carjacking; I think we're now number three. It became a place where the value of life—there was no value of life.

"You can't oversimplify it; it comes from a very real place. It's



sad, because the people are good. They're good people, and they're resilient people, more than anywhere else in the world that I've ever come across. There's something about South African flesh—we get up and we move forward, and we sometimes don't take a moment for a little bit of self-awareness or self-pity. We're such beasts at having to survive—I have the utmost respect for that, but it's not the healthiest way to go through life. We've become a genera-

tion in South Africa that is driven by very valid anger, but the cost is coming at such a high level—and that's a painful thing to watch. A lot of my emotional drive comes purely from the fact that I was born on that continent, and that I was raised there, and that it was different. I have a very strong relationship with Africa, one that's built on lots of love and massive pain."

Some of that pain is harder to talk about: When Theron was fifteen, her mother shot and killed her father—in self-defense and to protect Charlize. No charges were ever brought. She's not thrilled to be asked about this again and again—and yet again now.



Charlize with Sean Penn at the premiere of his movie *The Gunman*, in London in February.

"It always ends up in articles," she says. "Monster was the instant connection—'Oooh, ahhh, I'm connecting the dots.' No, fucker, you're not connecting any dots. Please."

Monster, the story of serial killer Aileen Wuornos, is a singular, seminal film, and Theron's work is peerless. Roger Ebert, no less, blessed it as "one of the greatest performances in the history of the cinema." Gerta was there to see her daughter win the Oscar for it, and Theron, who surely was the

most stunning beauty to walk the earth that night, spoke directly to her at the end of her acceptance speech.

"My mom—you've sacrificed so much for me to be able to live here and make my dreams come true, and there are no words to describe how much I love you."

There wasn't a dry eye in the house, and there wasn't a story about Theron in the press that didn't plumb the tragedy.

"My mom didn't ask for any of this stuff to ever be. I hate that every article she has to read, that that's the thing—'On a cold night'—no. There were many nights. Many. And the damage that people



assume—that's not a reality. It feels cheapened. You're reduced to one event, to one thing. A life is full of color and depth and highs and lows, and it really feels like the easy shot, the easy presumption of where somebody's depth comes from.

"There's never enough context, and there never will be. For the actors out there who really understand the power of secrecy and how effective the weapon can be when you work from that place—I'm almost there completely, where I feel like I can work from that place for a little bit longer because everybody just assumes that that's the thing that drives me. Then you do something like *Young Adult* and it kicks a lot of people in the ass, because it kills the assumption that that's the only machine you drive from."

Ah, Young Adult. Pay attention to the undressing scene featuring Theron, a demented former prom queen who comes back to the small town she despises and lands in bed with a crippled, sexually disfigured former classmate, played by Patton Oswalt, in a sequence as cruel and sad and funny as sex between two mammals can ever be.

Oswalt's a brilliant stand-up and writer, and I asked him about working with Theron on *Young Adult*.

"There are people who up your game when you're around them," he said. "It's beyond professionalism. It's intimidating and inspiring. She helped me get rid of a lot of my Method-actor pretensions—she said, 'Let's do the work and we'll figure it out.' It was a scary thing, but she made me feel 'I'm a professional fucking actor—I can do this.'"

Theron wants me to see the two trophies on her desk.

"This is so you can see what I really find important in my life—this is my Victoria's Secret What Is Sexy? award, and that's my Victoria's Secret What Is Sexy? award—two years in a row. Sexiest Actress, Sexiest Legs. Oscar, shmoscar. That's why we have glass desks, as well—so I can see my great legs."

Where's Oscar?

"My Oscar's in my house."

Is it displayed?

"Yeah, it's displayed. I'm very proud of it. We couldn't sell that movie to save our lives—we were going to sign a deal to just release it on video. A lot of people didn't want to buy in to how horrific her story was. 'You can't do that' is all I kept hear-

ing when we were editing. But what if that's the truth? You should be able to tell her story as a human being with all her flaws. You should be able to do that.

"People give in. They end up with a movie that's not the movie they set out to go and make. People buckle. Not that we had any ground to stand on, but we never buckled. We believed that we had worked hard enough to earn some kind of understanding. That's something that's very rare. Very rare. That was shit-scary, to invest that much time and go, I'd rather just sign this off to Blockbuster knowing it's the movie we set out to make. None of us got paid. We worked our balls off. This should be the prize."

Sean Penn won his first Oscar—for *Mystic River*—on the same night as Theron, in 2004. Who knew?



"WOW, HE REALLY
JUST LEFT US
HERE. CAN YOU
MAKE FIRE WITH
TWO STICKS AND
A ROCK?"
-NOVEMBER 1999



SHE LOWERS THE BOTTLE, WIPING HER LIPS WITH THE BACK OF A HAND. "UH-OH," SHE SAYS. "COPS." — MAY 2001



"PEOPLE STILL SAY, 'WHAT DO YOU KNOW? YOU'RE AN AFRICAN.'" —NOVEMBER 2007 "We've been friends for twenty years. He was married, I was in a long-term relationship, our spouses—not regularly, but we were in each other's lives. I think our friendship stemmed from mutual respect—more on my end, because I really didn't have a body of work twenty years ago, but my love and passion for making films—that was our common ground. And also, Sean liked to have conversations outside of just making movies. That's sometimes hard to find among friends here, and that's where our friendship really blossomed.

"A lot of people want to tell you the answer to solving all of Africa's problems from what they've seen on CNN. Sean is not that guy. When he started working in Haiti and I started working on the AIDS front in South Africa, we spent a lot of time talking about those worlds. I think that for both of us there was never a moment where we thought that this—what we have today—would ever even be a possibility. Evereverever. I think we're both finding ourselves at this moment in our lives kind of shocked. Both of us. Just when you think you know how things are supposed to go down, life just kicks you in the ass and guess what? You don't have a clue.

"It is nice to be in something where the friendship came first. I've never had that. There's a weight to the relationship already that I don't think you have when you just meet somebody and enter a relationship. There's a foundation of twenty years that the two of us have shared with each other in all these different ways that is really the foundation of something that has brought a lot of beautiful things into my life.

"We get so stuck in wanting to predict the future that we forget the moment that we're in. And the moment that we're in is just really good. It's really good, really nice. The marriage thing is always so strange to me anyway. I love the possibility of anything, but I'm really enjoying myself and the everyday moment and how that coincides with my son and my life and my friends. I'm a very, very, very lucky girl. Very lucky."

Plus, he's easy on the eyes. Although he's getting...craggy.

"He's hot. He is hot. How do you say that in an interview? You're a forty-year-old woman sounding like a sixteen-year-old. There's something beautiful about that, but you lack the articulation of really saying what it's like when somebody walks into

you'd be able to see. If somebody had said to me, 'This is what it will be,' I would've said, 'Fuck off.' As you can see, it makes me smile."

She's smiling, and she's yawning. Yoga was a long time ago. She kindly gives me a lift to my car—Sunset at rush hour is hell. And she drives well and she knows the turf.

Thanks for today, Charlize.

"We had a fuckin' amazing day, Scott—that's what I think. Now explain to me where your car is."

The red Ford Flex, facing the smog.

"Let me get out and give you a hug."

Nice is nice. I shut my eyes and think of Gay Talese.

She coughed and she was gone. 19

THE GUYS WHO MADE SIRI ARE ON THE VERGE OF RELEASING OPTIMIZING THE INTERNET THAT COULD, AMONG OTHER THINGS, AND CAPABLE. AS WITH ALL INNOVATIONS THAT CLAIM TO BE

BY JOHN H.

VIV, A WORD THAT CONJURES LIFE ITSELF. VIV IS A WAY OF

UNDERMINE GOOGLE AND MAKE YOU FAR MORE INTELLIGENT ADVANCES, HOWEVER, THERE, UM, MIGHT BE PROBLEMS.

89

n anonymous green V marks the door of an ordinary office in downtown San Jose, California-inside, just a pool table, whiteboards scrawled with formulas, a dozen programmers working at computers with Nerfguns at their sides. The three founders gather in a glass-walled conference room. "What you're going to see here is a very early prototype," says Dag Kittlaus, the business guy. "This is only a few weeks old." On the screen at the end of the room, a green Vappears. Green bars radiate, and then it connects. This is Viv. their bid for world domination. It's a completely new concept for talking to machines and mak-

ing them do our bidding—not just asking them for simple information but also making them think and react. Right now, a founder named Adam Cheyer is controlling Viv from his computer. "I'm gonna start with a few simple queries," Cheyer says, "then ramp it up a little bit." He speaks a question out loud: "What's the status of JetBlue 133?" A second later, Viv returns with an answer: "Late again, what else is new?"

To achieve this simple result, Viv went to an airline database called FlightStats.com and got the estimated arrival time and records that show JetBlue 133 is on time just 62 percent of the time.

Onscreen, for the demo, Viv's reasoning is displayed in a series of boxes-and this is where things get really extraordinary, because you can see Viv begin to reason and solve problems on its own. For each problem it's presented, Viv writes the program to find the solution. Presented with a question about flight status, Viv decided to dig out the historical record on its own. The snark comes courtesy of Chris Brigham, Viv Labs founder number three.

Now let's make it more interesting. "What's the best available seat on Virgin 351 next Wednesday?"

Viv searches an airline-services distributor called Travelport, the back end for Expedia and Orbitz, and finds twenty-eight available seats. Then it goes to SeatGuru.com for information on individual seats per plane, and this is when Viv really starts to show off. Every time you use Viv, you teach it your personal preferences. These go into a private database linked with your profile, currently called "My Stuff," which will be (they promise) under your complete control. So Cheyer is talking to his personal version of Viv, and it knows that he likes aisle seats and extra legroom. The solution is seat 9D, an economy-class exit-row seat with extra legroom.

Even at this most basic level, as Kittlaus points out, the implications of Viv are world-changing: Priceline pays Google about \$2 billion a year to get displayed at the top of cheap-flight searches. The entire Internet sales model is based on finding something, if you can find it, then going to the Web site or the app and looking some more and entering your dates and credit card. But Viv knows what Cheyer's looking for. It knows if he likes hotels with swimming pools and the best deals on his favorite entertainment options, even the airport he usually flies from. And although some of this interactivity is already available on Google's Siri clone, Google Now, Viv also knows how to enter all Cheyer's personal data and credit-card numbers and execute the transaction-onestop shopping without the stop.

"It's that weaving together of services that creates this new paradigm that we think is going to take over," Kittlaus says. "It completely changes the way advertising works online. This will be the filter to you."

And how much is Viv going to charge Priceline?

"I don't know yet," Cheyer says. "But it'll certainly be far less than buying words on Google. That's why advertising completely changes."

But won't Priceline pay Viv to get higher in Viv's rankings? "We'll learn from the way that Google has done it," Chever says. "We'll have, um, organic results."

And Google? Why haven't they sent out a hitman after you? "Well, they've sent people after us," Cheyer says. "They've showed a lot of interest in what we're doing-positive interest."

And Orbitz and Travelocity? If Viv goes direct to the data, who needs them? "Well," Kittlaus says, "they'll get involved, too."

Won't this be another death blow to the media, which has never been able to sell ads online? People really aren't going to want their phones singing jingles at them.

"I think the business models will change," Kittlaus says. And this may be the understatement of the Internet age.

> RIGHAM CAME UP WITH the beautiful idea, which makes its own perfect sense. Cheyer was always the visionary. When they met at SRI International twelve years ago, Cheyer was already a chief scientist distilling the work of four hundred

researchers from the Defense Department's legendary CALO project, trying to teach computers to talk—really talk, not just answer a bunch of preprogrammed questions. Kittlaus came along a few years later, a former cell-phone executive looking for the next big idea at a time when the traditional phone companies were saying the iPhone would be a disaster—only phone companies can make phones. An adventurer given to jumping out of planes and grueling five-hour sessions of martial arts, he saw the possibilities instantly—cell phones were getting smarter every day, mobile computing was the future, and nobody wanted to thumb-type on a tiny little keyboard. Why not teach a phone to talk?

Brigham, at the time just an undergrad student randomly assigned to Cheyer's staff, looked like a surfer, but he had a Matrix-like ability to see the green numbers scroll, offhandedly solving in a single day a problem that had stumped one of Cheyer's senior scientists for months. Soon he took responsibility for the computer architecture that made their ideas possible. But he also had a rule-breaking streak—maybe it was all those weekends he spent picking rocks out of his family's horse pasture, or the time his father shot him in the ass with a BB gun to illustrate the dangers of carrying a weapon in such a careless fashion. He admits, with some embarrassment, now thirty-one and the father of a young daughter, that he got kicked out of summer school for hacking the high school computer system to send topless shots to all the printers. After the SRI team and its brilliant idea were bought by Steve Jobs and he made it famous—Siri, the first talking phone, a commercial and pop-culture phenomenon that now appears in five hundred million different devices-Brigham sparked international news for

teaching Siri to answer a notorious question: "Where do I dump a body?" (Swamps, reservoirs, metal foundries, dumps, mines.)

He couldn't resist the *Terminator* jokes, either. When the Siri team was coming up with an ad campaign, joking about a series of taglines that went from "Periodically Human" to "Practically Human" to "Positively Human," he said the last one should be "Kill All Humans."

In the fall of 2012, after they all quit Apple, the three men gathered at Kittlaus's house in Chicago to brainstorm, throwing out their wildest ideas. What about nanotechnology? Could they develop an operating system to run at the atomic level? Or maybe just a silly wireless thing that plugged into your ear and told you everything you needed to know in a meeting like this, including the names and loved ones of everyone you met?

Then Brigham took them back to Cheyer's original vision. There was a compromise in the ontology, he said. Siri talked only to a few limited functions, like the map, the datebook, and Google. All the imitators, from the outright copies like Google Now and Microsoft's Cortana to a host of more-focused applications with names like Amazon Echo, Samsung S Voice, Evi, and Maluuba, followed the same principle. The problem was you had to code everything. You had to tell the computer what to think. Linking a single function to Siri took months of expensive computer science. You had to anticipate all the possibilities and account for nearly infinite outcomes. If you tried to open that up to the world,

"I think the business models will change," says Dag kittlaus. This may be the understatement of the Internet age.

other people would just come along and write new rules and everything would get snarled in the inevitable conflicts of competing agendas—just like life. Even the famous supercomputers that beat Kasparov and won *Jeopardy!* follow those principles. That was the "pain point," the place where everything stops: There were too many rules.

So what if they just wrote rules on how to solve rules?

The idea was audacious. They would be creating a DNA, not a biology, forcing the program to think for itself.

Again, Kittlaus saw the many possibilities. Google was teaching cars to drive. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs were exploding. The "Internet of Things" was the new buzzword, machines all connecting by WiFi to the magic of the Cloud. And everybody was after the final interface that would unite them, spending billions of dollars in the hope of harnessing the winning innovation to their specific platform. Soon, Google would hire AI legend Ray Kurzweil and buy him a \$500 million lab, and Facebook would spend another fortune on a team headed by NYU's Yann LeCun. But Viv was different. They were the little guy without big ties, and the idea of an open system was a hapkido move, leveraging their small size into something mighty. Their rebel DNA could work with all the platforms. And what medium could be easier than voice, their area of greatest expertise? *One platform to rule them all!*

They're joking, sort of.

They started out on pen and paper, breaking it down into the smallest possible pieces. You want the computer to do something, but you don't want to tell it how. It has to figure out that part for itself. So you start by teaching the program a concept, because a person can't act without a conception of where he's trying to go. Then you teach it an action. And you nudge it so that it finds its way from one to the other-which might just be the essential code of life itself, from DNA to the mysterious algorithms that unveiled the universe, from concept to the mysterious process that leads to action. If they could solve that, the program's brain could gobble up new concepts and actions until it contained ... well, everything.

But was it possible? They weren't sure. Cheyer and Brigham spent the next six weeks trying to figure it out.

Brigham's bachelor party in Denver that fall included some of the smartest minds in artificial intelligence and computer engineering. After the party, Brigham ended up at a bar with Mark Gabel, a young hotshot at the University of Texas with the perfect mix of expertise: artificial intelligence, natural language, and program analysis. "He was completely shitfaced," Gabel remembers.

"Wait, wait, don't tell him about that," Cheyer says.

Gabel laughs. "He actually tried to recruit Danny-the guy you just met-at the same time, but he was so messed up and incoherent Danny just said, 'This is a complete joke. I'm not going to sacrifice my career for this.' He's kicking himself now."

They stayed in the bar for hours, talking about atomic functional units and program synthesis. Gabel couldn't figure out where Brigham was going with it. Research in program synthesis was stagnant, stuck at tiny little functions. How could they do entire tasks?

Then he got it. A working-class kid who split his time between math and classical piano, Gabel had come to understand that complex systems were always the same—you had to start by making the problem more abstract. He could see the beauty of the rule behind the rules, not a model but a metamodel. They had to define the problem in such a way that it could be solved without solving the problem.

But he still wasn't sure it was possible.

They started meeting at Brigham's apartment. Gabel would fly out and they'd set up a whiteboard and draw equations, starting with seemingly simple problems. How could they make the jump from concept to action? On the most basic level, if they said, "Find parking lots near the White House," how would the computer figure out which white house you were talking about? It might find restaurants named the White House. But they couldn't tell the computer how to make the distinction without writing a bunch of codes.

Then the answer came to them—the glimmer of an answer, an elegant subplan that was like another little piece of DNA: Find the solution, it said, and stop there. "Intent representation," they called it. By latching the program to a goal, they gave it a kind of freedom.

At the start of January, they were ready to start coding. Seed money came from the richest man in China and Gary Morgenthaler, the first investor in Siri. "I looked at the work they were doing," Morgenthaler remembers, "and said, This is as good or better than anything I've seen in twenty years." They hired just two employees, Joshua Levy, a kindhearted, homeschooled midwesterner who started college at thirteen, and Marcello Bastéa-Forte, a rumpled Stanford grad who was already the top front-end engineer at Siri in his early twenties. In a small cubicle in a space in San Jose with



open ceilings, the smell of sawdust in the air, they wrote the basic code in a six-week push of furious coding.

Would it work? They still weren't sure.

For the first demo, they gathered around the table and asked for a simple weather report—and the program seemed to crunch along forever, trying to come up with a way to come up with an answer.

Then it asked for more information because it was confused. The program had intent! It wanted to do something.

Now the struggle against writing new rules became constant. They'd find some gremlin creeping in, like local movie listings in the middle of a flower search, and it was so tempting to just ban movie listings from the middle of the flower search. But then someone else would say "Find theater listing" and you'd have to add another rule. Every time, like parents trying to raise imaginative children, they had to define correct in a way that made the program improvise.

The solution was something they call the "planning objective function"—but at this point we get into trade secrets, says Cheyer. Or maybe religion. The point is, they did it. They created a program that could write its own code and find its own solutions. They named their invention Viv, after the Latin for "life." If it worked out in the marketplace and the feisty little improviser beat out the coded fortresses of the giant players, Cheyer's dream would finally be realized—he would make machines come to life.

For the next year and a half, they worked in secret.

In the screen, chever moves to step two. This is how the world will connect to Viv. After a simple fifteen-minute video tutorial, you open this training module—it looks like lozenges of text with some words highlighted—and teach it your specialized vocabulary. That knowledge goes to Viv's brain, which gets smarter with every new lesson. Say you own a company called Wine.com and someone just asked Viv to find a good merlot—no, an awesome merlot. Awesome is the kind of imprecise word an enthusiastic human might use. Does your database make it clear that

"Find an awesome merlot," Cheyer says.

awesome is a rating?

Instantly, Viv figures "awesome" must fit into the "rating" concept. Apparently, someone already taught it the meaning of *awesome*.

Cheyer's a little disappointed. "If it were wrong," he says, "you would literally drag and drop to teach it No, that's wrong." And if you try to mess with it, Viv resists. Cheyer demonstrates by trying to teach it that a merlot is actually a kind of car.

"I'm not sure what you mean," Viv responds. "Please give a few more examples." In time, the hive mind will overwhelm mischief and human error. And all this requires no more skill than using a basic Web-site template, which hands the mysterious tools of artificial intelligence to ordinary people and lets them build on the contributions of all who came before.

Eventually, the Viv team hopes, its V will be everywhere. Press the V on your refrigerator and the fridge will say, *Hello, how can I help, John?* And you'll say, *What is there to eat?* And the fridge will see that it's lunchtime and ask if you want the usual cheese sandwich or something more interesting. You have ingredients that match a recipe for baked ziti on Edible Gourmet. Should I download it?

How long will it take?

You don't even have to say "How long will it take to cook?" because your fridge understands you. It knows you don't like to waste time in front of a stove. Seventeen point four minutes, short enough even for a lazy ass like you.

Take the snark down 10 percent, you say, cursing Chris Brigham. And how much will the recipe cost?

Ten cents, the fridge says.

After a little back and forth about nutritional content and your excess belly flab and the free recipes available on the Web, you say fuck it and the fridge sends the recipe to your iPhone—ka-ching for Edible Gourmet, ka-ching for the guys behind that talking V, and ka-ching for you, too, since your food is that much less likely to rot in your fridge. And there will be a V on your car, too, on your bathroom mirror, your washing machine, the pump at your gas station, the ATM at your bank. Ask the Coke machine if your son is free for softball on Saturday and the Coke machine will say, Looks like he's finished with his homework but the forecast is rain. Want me to book an appointment at the batting cage?

Ka-ching for Joe's Indoor Baseball.

It's the world of seamless convenience, all your desires satisfied with a minimum of fuss.

HE LARGER IMPLICATIONS TAKE A WHILE to sink in. Why do you need a fancy phone if you can talk to your refrigerator? How much are you going to spend



on an expensive computer when your alarm clock can do your shopping? Just what we need-another hurricane of creative destruction. And Viv will make it easier to talk to machines at a time when machines are getting fiendishly smarter, which could be the biggest problem of all-not because they might become aware and send Terminators after us, although people like Bill Gates and Stephen Hawking are starting to worry about that, but because they might take our jobs. As the technology writer Martin Ford details in an alarming new book called Rise of the Robots, there's already a robot pharmacist at the University of California that makes up ten thousand doses of medicine a day, reading the doses off bar codes so that there's never an error. Robot test scorers are more accurate than teachers, even at reading essays. Electronic-discovery services are eating the jobs of lawyers and paralegals. A newswriting program called Narrative Science puts out millions of simple sports and business stories. Online classes are taking on traditional universities, learning to solve their low completion rates with robot tutors. Fast-food robots are learning how to cook a burger, wrap it, and hand it to you-a threat to the jobs of 3.7 million fast-food workers. Robots are even learning to administer cancer treatments, diagnose diseases, and care for the elderly. According to a February report from Business Insider, the market for this mixture of intelligent algorithms and robots is now growing seven times faster than traditional manufacturing robotics, much of it driven by smartphones and tablets

that can control them "at more accessible price points." And Viv will make all of this so much easier, turbocharging new services like Uber and Google's self-driving cars, which will be owned by Google or some other company and go back to a central warehouse for robot servicing, which is bad news for the millions of Americans working at car washes, service stations, taxi companies, and delivery companies.

Futurists like Jeremy Rifkin have been warning about the "end of work" for years, but most people have filed that fear under "Luddite" and assume that capitalism will continue replacing lost jobs. Now some of our smartest economists are starting to ring alarms. Back in 2012, Paul Krugman said there was "no question"

and heath care." Martin Ford cites a recent jobs summit he attended with about fifty tech-company CEOs. "Here in Silicon Valley, there's a remarkable consensus about this. Every single person agreed we're on the leading edge of a disruption, and we're going to have to move to a guaranteed basic income. There was overwhelming support for that."

It seems unfair to lay all this on the gentle geniuses of Viv, who are just trying to give life to their beautiful idea.

"We tell our investors they can take comfort that they're part of the beginning of the end," Brigham jokes.

"I don't think that's what we tell our investors," Cheyer says.

"Maybe business kind of gets destroyed in the process," he con-

cedes. "But they can also get business they never would've gotten—like Match.com could say, 'Hey, it's Friday night and you've both indicated that you like theater. Do you want me to check out the shows on Friday night? Do you want me to get reservations for that restaurant near the theater? Do you want me to have an Uber pick up your date? Do you want flowers sent to the table?' It's new business for everyone."

And Viv solves the discovery problem, making it easier to find the little store or small magazine. It can integrate your loyalties, registering your preference for mom-and-pop stores or couch-surfing in Thailand. My Stuff will actually ask you

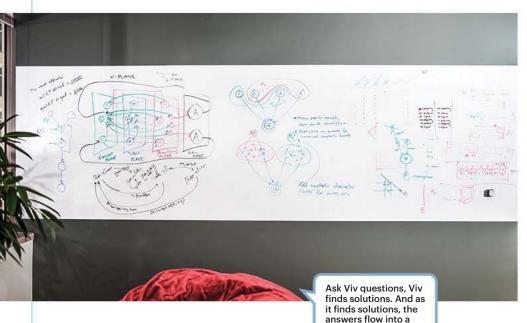
questions to make this easy. "I've noticed you ate Mexican food three times this week. Can I infer that you like Mexican foods?" And unlike data-mining

snoops like Facebook and Google, which can tell if you're gay or pregnant even before you admit it to yourself, you can also tell Viv what to forget. "This kind of turns the Google privacy model on its head," Kittlaus says.

And services will be working together in all kinds of new ways. Yummly and Edible Gourmet have recipes, but once they're plugged into Viv they might find somebody asking about the right wine to go with those recipes—and then linking to mapping services and local shops. If old-fashioned things like journalistic ethics were not of concern, Esquire could even harness its product reviews to recommend the best razors or shoes and take a cut on the purchases.

The opportunities are endless, they say. Somebody's got to teach Viv to monitor your refrigerator and order fresh milk. Somebody will build a program that sends out locations and lineups for all the local Little League games. Somebody could build a birds-and-bees tutorial to sidestep the fight over sex education. Law firms can develop their own specialized law-bots. A top cardiologist just suggested a medical noodge to nag you about taking your medicine and tell the doctor if you forget, which could actually save lives.

And who knows, maybe Viv will even help America's beleaguered musicians. "You can imagine just saying, 'Viv, take my lat-



new global brain. And

Viv gets "smarter."

that smart machines were rapidly replacing workers in many industries, a trend that had the potential to "turn our society into something unrecogniz-

able." Last year, Larry Summers warned about the "devastating consequences of robots, 3-D printing, [and] artificial intelligence" on both white- and blue-collar jobs. In February, Robert Reich said we were "barreling toward" an economy in which robots do much of the work and most of the profits go to the robots' owners, while humans are reduced to odd jobs like "Uber drivers, Instacart shoppers, and Airbnb hosts." A new study from Jeffrey Sachs and three other prominent economists puts the question so starkly it seems a plot point from dystopian science fiction: "Will smart machines replace humans like the internal combustion engine replaced horses? If so, can putting people out of work, or at least out of good work, also put the economy out of business?"

Sachs's answer? An unqualified yes. His study "firmly predicts" a long-run decline in labor's share of the national income so severe it could crash the economy. "Absent appropriate fiscal policy that redistributes from winners to losers," he concludes, "smart machines can mean long-term misery for all."

Even the libertarians of Silicon Valley are starting to worry. "As much as it pains me to say so," says Jaron Lanier, the polymath behind virtual reality, "we can survive if we only destroy the middle classes of musicians, journalists, and photographers. What is not survivable is the additional destruction of the middle classes in transportation, manufacturing, energy, office work, education,

THAT'S THE REAL EXCITEMENT OF VIV, THEY INSIST—THE IDEA OF UNLEASHING THE CREATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ENERGY OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE. "WE BELIEVE THIS WILL BE AS BIG AS THE INTERNET ITSELF," SAYS CHEYER. "IT'S A REVOLUTION."

est track and put it on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest,'" Kittlaus says

But all this wild potential may also be Viv's biggest threat. Established sources like OpenTable will probably dominate restaurant bookings, they concede, and companies like Yelp will have a huge content advantage over new arrivals. Amazon will grow ever mightier. "If you provide a unified interface with no way for people or vendors to differentiate themselves," Gabel says, "economics just tells you at that point it's just a race to the bottom. So we have to preserve branding and personalization. We don't really want this to become like Soviet Russia: 'Buy me the official state car. Get me the official state hotel room.'"

But the fact is they don't know the answers to many of these questions. They've been working with their heads down, pushing to beat the competition, and they'll just have to worry about all that later.

Anyway, it's not really in their hands. "The world is going to decide what this thing is going to do," Kittlaus says. "That's the novel part of it. We've been building things to inspire people, to show what's possible, but the real question is What's going to happen when we open this up? What are people going to create with it? We don't know."

IV INVITES THE IMAGINATION, there's no doubt about that. You could sit in your hotel room and ask Siri gloomy questions: "Are you going to put everybody out of a job?"

"I can't answer that," Siri says.

"Are you going to put me out of a job?"

"I can't answer that," Siri says.

Or you could start a dating service, using that seductively radiating lime-green V to link up restaurants and florists and lingerie stores! You could have a robot music teacher with in-

finite patience. And how about a satellite-controlled Roomba to cut your damn lawn? Like those big modern combines! And Viv could write the software and run the mowers!

Not exactly, Kittlaus says. You'd still have to connect to the satellite and map out the trees and rocks and write the program to control the machine and build the machine (and handle the liability issues). "Viv's not going to be able to do all the work for you." But Viv would make it a lot easier to put the service out there without a ton of advertising. "Say I want a cheap lawn-mowing service, and because you've got this automated thing, all they do is come once a week and toss this thing in your yard and it just goes about its business. It's going to be pretty cheap."

And once it was in the yard, Viv would be happy to run it. I'm gone a week—have the lawn cut when I get back?

"Exactly. And the beauty of it is it plugs your lawn mower into a wider ecosystem—like with the refrigerator, you can say 'Order me some more milk.'"

So the Roomba lawn mower could have sensors that told you if you needed more lime, connect you to a supplier, and have the lime delivered?

"Absolutely."

And John's RoombaMower Co. gets a cut?

"Exactly."

And if its program for satellite guidance is great, RoombaMower Co. can sell the software to every aspiring robo-lawn-mower company in the universe?

"Absolutely," Kittlaus says.

RoombaMower will conquer the world!

"That's actually a really good idea," Kittlaus says. "I think you should quit your job and do it."

And that's the real excitement of Viv, they insist—the idea of unleashing the creative and entrepreneurial energy of millions of people. They all feel it will be the biggest thing they ever do in their lives. "As a founder," Cheyer says, "I'm allowed to be effusive. We believe this thing will be as big and important as the Internet itself and as mobile itself. It's a revolution."

They think they're about six months from a beta test and a year from a public launch, hopefully with a two-year head start on their giant competitors. Morgenthaler's optimistic: "They have a new vision and a time-to-market advantage, and the architecture is wholly new. It will take people a considerable amount of time to figure out."

Kittlaus has been so busy he hasn't even had time to patent a potentially huge new business idea of his own—the lightbulb idea.

The lightbulb idea?

"It's obvious," he says. Because they're everywhere and already have their own power source, lightbulbs will be the most convenient way to talk to machines. Add a microphone and some sweet little algorithm and bingo—it's a billion-dollar product.

Steal it fast.

N THE MAIN ROOM, at four long tables, the coders work away, racing toward the public launch. One is working on the user interface, which has to be flexible enough to appear on all kinds of screens. Others are trying to give Viv a better short-term memory, so if you say "three," it will remember whether you're talking about how many children you have or how many there are in your party. This is called "dialogue management," currently a subject of much excitement and research at AI labs across the country. But, of course, the Viv guys don't want to hard-write too [continued on page 130]

The little Irish MMA fighter **CONOR MCGREGOR** is a throwback to another time. That time could be a century ago, when gentlemen pugilists reigned. Or it could be that time when men cowered and animals ruled the earth. Yeah, probably that. **By Chris Jones**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW HETHERINGTON

MOST OF THE TIME, Conor McGregor wins fights with his fists. He has won once with elbow strikes, and he has won once by submission. But the other fifteen times he has professionally beaten another man bloody—most recently Dennis Siver, whom he picked apart in Boston in January—it has been with his hands. His coach, an Irish mixed martial artist named John Kavanagh, has studied the physics of human combat and collision for decades, and even he can't explain why the five-foot-nine McGregor can hit as hard as he does. The hardest hitters usually have long arms, which Mc-

Gregor does, and they usually have big fists, which McGregor does, but there's something else in him, some mysterious and extraordinary combination of desire and angle and speed, that makes his punches land like bombs.

McGregor, who is also extremely Irish, has an upright stance when he fights, a style that is both entrancing to watch and almost comically traditionalist. "He looks exactly like the Notre Dame logo," says Dana White, the president of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, referring to the university's ornery bare-knuck-





led leprechaun. Watching McGregor fight brings to mind ancient words like *fisticuffs* or *donnybrook*. He makes the delivery of knockouts look like some time-honored craft that occupies the space between art and science, like barrel making or leatherwork. A former plumber, he makes fighting seem like a trade.

When ordinary men land a punch, it lands with a blow, a seismic shock, like a hammer's thud. Most punches blemish. When McGregor lands a punch, his fists behave more like chisels, like awls. His punches cut. They don't bruise the skin; they break it. By the second round of their fight, Dennis Siver didn't look as though he'd been battered so much as he'd been glassed. His face was full of tiny holes.

Whatever reason McGregor's punches are different, they have made him his sport's newest darling, the culmination of a two-year rise from obscurity to headliner to crossover star. He will fight Brazilian champion Jose Aldo for the UFC's featherweight belt in July, and White believes it will be his organization's biggest fight of the year, "a global event," in large part because of McGregor's ability to seem more giant than he is.

But the twenty-six-year-old McGregor doesn't want to be regarded as peerless in only a single facet of his occupation—as just a puncher. "I don't look at a man who's expert in one area as a specialist," he says. "I look at him as a rookie in ten other areas. If you can box, what happens if I grab hold of your legs? If you put me face-to-face with Floyd Mayweather—pound-for-pound boxing's best—if I fought Floyd, I would kill him in less than thirty seconds. It would take me less than thirty seconds to wrap around him like a boa constrictor and strangle him."

McGregor sees the human body the way he sees fights, the way he sees this New York bar in which he's sheltering from the cold, the way he sees existence: Each is a collection of openings and avenues, road-blocks and hurdles. He always sits, as he is sitting now, with his back to a corner; he has scouted the exits; he has several routes of possibility mapped out in his cartographer's brain, every available advance and retreat. "I have a self-defense mind," he says. "I've had it all my life."

The way even the most successful still covet, McGregor dreams of possessing the ultimate trapdoor, of mastering the decisive submission that would finish any opponent: the rear naked choke. He has never managed to apply it during a UFC fight. He talks about it the way any of us talks about an object of desire that eludes us.

"It's the most dominant submission," he says almost wistfully. It isn't an arm or a knee bar or an ankle lock, each of which leaves its victim the opportunity to survive, however slight. And it isn't a punch that can be slipped or countered. The rear naked choke is almost a metaphor for the consequences of our most calamitous mistakes. "You can do nothing to me, but I can do whatever the fuck I want to you," McGregor says. "I have complete control."

He's not sure he's making himself plain enough. He wants you to understand the feeling of true hopelessness, the sensation of every last door closing to you. He wants you to hate that feeling, which will make you appreciate more deeply the moments you are free. His longtime girlfriend, Dee Devlin, sitting beside him in the bar, does her best to explain his intentions. "He wants you to be better than you are," she says.

So under the bright lights of a photo studio, he strips down to his underwear and jumps on you from behind. You feel his weight lean into you, 170 pounds walking around—he can cut more than 20 pounds in the week before weigh-ins—his pectorals fitting into the tops of your shoulders like puzzle pieces. His broad chest is painted with a giant tattoo of a gorilla eating a human heart. It's not some cartoonish representation of a human heart, either, but an illustration ripped out of a medical textbook, with ventricles and veins. It is a drawing of your heart, and now you can feel his, beating through the ink and into your back.

McGregor's legs hook around your waist, anchored in place by his huge ass. "Glutes are a motherfucker," he says. "Glutes are power." The sole of his left foot presses against the point of your hip; the heel of his right foot digs into your groin. Almost by instinct, your hands find that leg and try to remove it, but legs beat arms almost every time, the way arms beat necks. His right arm wraps around your throat, his thickly veined forearm locked under your chin. His left arm crosses over his right wrist and tucks behind your head. And then he begins to pull back his right arm while he pushes forward with his left.

It doesn't hurt. That's the wrong word. You're uncomfortable. McGregor knows the feeling. The last time he lost a fight, the sixth bout of his career, back in 2010, it was in thirty-eight seconds, and it was to a choke. He was so averse to the sensation, he tapped out before he lost consciousness, one of the great regrets of his life. "That ate me alive," he says. "After that, I said I was going to fight to the death. You're going to have to kill me."

The rear naked choke is oblivious to such resolutions. Your body, like nearly everything you do with it, has imperfections that can seem like evolutionary carelessness. There are the few square inches of your liver that lie exposed, wide open under your ribs, a fourlane expressway to your central nervous system. There are the underengineered flying buttresses of your knees, waiting to snap. And there is your carotid artery, conveying massive volumes of your blood to your brain, close enough to the surface of your neck that you can see and feel it coursing, as though a salmon might run up it. Because that artery means life, it also means death. There is no way for you to strengthen it, to shield it, to mitigate the effects of pressure put upon it. Now McGregor squeezes, in two directions at the same time-again pulling with his right, pushing with his left-his arms like the blades of dull scissors. Your eyes are drawn down, leading the way for the rest of you, to the tattoos on his left wrist: a mustachioed gentleman in a top hat, and one of McGregor's principal mantras: slow is smooth, smooth is fast. He doesn't have to squeeze very hard, and he doesn't have to squeeze very long.

One second, two seconds, three seconds...

"Once the blood cuts from the brain, it's over," McGregor whispers. It is. You are.

MCGREGOR HAS LIVED HIS ENTIRE LIFE in pursuit of

the opposite sensation: *limitlessness*. For as long as he can remember, he has been obsessed with movement and its endless opportunities. He has studied animals for their



advantages-gorillas, lions, crocodiles-and in Kavanagh's Dublin gym, he tries to find their secrets in himself. Kavanagh has given him a key to the place, because McGregor will get the urge, as irresistible as a choke, to move at all hours of the day and night, slithering and monkey-stalking across the mats. Devlin routinely wakes up to find her man shadowboxing in front of the mirror at four in the morning. He doesn't lift weights or put in carefully apportioned session work like most fighters. "Machines don't use machines," he says, "and I am a machine." He doesn't recognize most of the modern walls we have built around ourselves. "Ritual is another word for fear, manifested in a different way." He doesn't believe in time, or at least he won't submit to it; he recognizes that clocks exist, but he sees no reason to obey their demands. He eats when he

wants, he sleeps when he wants, but mostly he moves when he wants. For McGregor, death would be stillness—if he believed in death.

"Even in death, they say your vision, you can see everything," he says. "It's almost like you're evolving to the next stage. It's like a different plane of existence, just another form of movement, now we're moving through the fucking universe or I don't know what the fuck. Think of what's out there."

In some ways, it's hard to bear McGregor's company, and not just because he might decide to choke you out at any moment. He is so confident and self-possessed, so in command of his body and seemingly of his fate, he fills you with doubt about yours. Most of our social interactions are based on the premise that we've all agreed to follow certain rules.

McGregor has not agreed to those rules, he will not, which is unnerving because it makes his behavior unpredictable—you find yourself saying, "You can't do that" or "You must do this," and he does and doesn't do it—but also because he makes you wonder why you've agreed to those rules yourself. He walks down the middle of streets; he eats the way storms consume coastlines. He is exhausting as a lunch partner, just as he is inside the octagon. In both instances, he is an igniter of brutal self-examination, the most unflattering mirror.

"You tell someone the truth about themselves and they crumble," he says.

"It's life," Devlin says of her boyfriend's ability to create fissures. Their relationship predates his career as a professional fighter by two weeks. His loves are intertwined. "It's our life," she says. "It's not like it's on and then it's off. It's just the way he is."

He has been fighting in some capacity since he was a child, born a challenging presence. "I seem to have a face—I seem to attract attention somehow," he says. "For some reason, people want to try to come at me. They want to hit me. I just wanted people to leave me alone, basically. I didn't get into this to be somebody. I got into it to feel comfortable in uncomfortable situations."

He began by kickboxing and then boxing. Then he discovered jujitsu and its system of levers, how to beat a man even when you're





PRACTICES
HIS REAR
NAKED
CHOKE
UPON THE
AUTHOR;
LEFT,
WITH DEE,
TRYING ON
SNEAKERS
IN NEW
YORK.

trapped on your back just by applying a little pressure where pressure isn't normally applied. "It fascinated me," he says. "It fascinated me then, and it fascinates me now."

Then he sat in the stands at UFC 93 in Dublin in 2009. "That's when I could reach out and touch it," he says. He was still an apprentice plumber then, one foot in each world. To hear him tell it, he went back to a damp building site and looked at the masters, men old and shivering before their time, and he made the choice, as though it were a choice, that he would no longer abide. He put down his tools, because machines don't use machines, and walked away. He saw in fighting a nearly perfect freedom, a way to translate his love of boundless physical expression in a sport where so long as you don't stick your fingers into eyes or open cuts, you're pretty much

good to go—into that rarest of lives, he and Dee, soaring together, never to be caged again. "No matter what was going on in my life, good or bad, I always knew—we knew—that we would end up here," he says. "It was inevitable in my head."

He uses *inevitable* more than most people. For McGregor, his certainty about his rise, and its continuing, isn't bravado. He is doing you the favor of letting you glimpse a future that only he has seen. It's almost as though he can't help it, as though his jaw is just one more pressure-release valve through which he can vent his bottomless reserves of spiritual anarchy. Ask him about his reputation for trash talk and this is what he says,

uninterrupted, it seems, even by breaths:

"Trash talk? Smack talk? This is an American term that makes me laugh. I simply speak the truth. I'm an Irish man. We don't give a fuck about feelings. We'll tell you the truth. People ask me a question about somebody, I tell them the truth. I don't have anything bad to say about Jose Aldo. It's pretty plain and simple. His time is up. It's done. There's somebody ruthless coming to get him. There's somebody cold coming to get him. I can look at him dead in the eye and say, It's done. You're over now. You're a champion that nobody gave a fuck about. Nobody cared about him before I came along. Nobody cared about the division before I came along. He's a decision machine. He can barely finish his dinner, never mind his opponent. And he's fought bums. He's fought little small bantamweights and he still can't put them away. Now he's coming in against a monster of a featherweight who hits like a truck. It's over for him. I don't need to say jackshit else. July is a wrap. It's inevitable."

Only two years ago, Dana White went to Dublin to accept an award from Trinity College. It seemed as though everywhere he went, every bar, every street corner, he heard Conor McGregor's name. White has been told about a thousand secret talents over the years; he has assessed an army of local heroes. You will never know their names. But White heard McGregor's name enough

"IF YOU PUT ME FACE-TO-FACE WITH FLOYD MAYWEATHER, I WOULD KILL HIM IN LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS."

that it made him wonder. He flew back to Las Vegas and asked his matchmakers about this Irish kid. They told him McGregor had fought a little, nothing especially noteworthy—fourteen fights, mostly against unknowns, mostly knockout wins, a couple of submission losses. Still curious, White brought his unlikely prospect out to the desert. He remembers driving up the Strip in his Ferrari and McGregor's energy competing with the engine and the lights. White signed him to a five-fight deal without ever seeing him fight.

"He's a penny stock that couldn't have worked out better," White says. "He's one in a million. He has that thing that you can't teach people, whatever it is that makes people gravitate toward you. He has that more than any fighter I've ever met. He makes you believe everything he believes."

Maybe it is a choice whether we abide. Maybe we don't have to be there at nine o'clock sharp. Maybe we don't die.

conor mcgregor has been damaged. It was during his first fight in America, in Boston in August 2013. In the second round against Max Holloway, McGregor emerged from a scramble on the ground with an unfamiliar feeling: He couldn't find his feet. Because he really believes what he believes, he still went on to win the fight, but he had torn the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee. It's a devastating injury for any athlete, but for someone like McGregor, it was especially cruel. He was built flawed like the rest of us after all.

He was told to sit still. He didn't listen. "People will study my recovery," he says. He found new ways to work out, shedding the last of his conventional weights and routines. He pressed his body against itself, refusing every invitation to idleness. He did push-ups against hotel-room sinks. He did single-leg squats. He came back and won his next three fights: TKO (first round, eighteen significant strikes landed); TKO (first round, nine); and most recently, against Siver, TKO (second round, sixty-four). Each was the performance of the night; each made him more popular; each made him more certain. "I learned a lot more about how important balance is, how important control of the body is," McGregor says. "From the moment I open my eyes, I'm trying to free my body. I'm trying to get looser, more flexible, to gain control. Movement is medicine to me."

He studied footage of his fights and of animals hunting other animals, and he became closer to one of them than one of us. If he was a breed apart before his knee was blown out, he was his own species after, better than he was. White tore up his contract, and then he tore it up again. In McGregor's fight against Aldo, he will see a cut of the pay-per-view for the first time. Because its outcome is inevitable, and because he has a self-defense mind, he has already begun thinking of what will come next. "I'm interested in movement, and I'm interested in money, and I'm interested in the movement of money," he says. "If I win that belt and we do a million pay-per-views, we can rip up that motherfucker right there and do what the fuck we want."

"Someone like him, the money just rains down," White says. "He's going to get everything he's ever wanted."

Earlier that freezing day in New York, McGregor and Devlin had walked into a Christian Louboutin store in the Meatpacking District. McGregor is a stylish man; for him, clothes are another means of applying pressure to other men. He tried on several pairs of sneakers, ridiculous sneakers, the sort of clown shoes that would get the shit kicked out of a kid who wore them to the wrong school. He got stuck on a pair of gleaming white high-tops studded with rainbow hunks of plastic, little pyramids and diamonds that fought with the smooth red soles for his eye's dubious attention.

"They're fucking out there," he said, looking at himself in a mirror. "Wouldn't see no one back home wearing a pair of these."

He looked at them some more, turning, convincing himself. "If you like them, get them," Devlin said.

"If someone says something—whap," he said, and he began firing off kicks in the middle of the store, the taken-aback employees looking at him and his cauliflower ears anew, doing all the mental arithmetic that men do when they're ranking themselves within the orders of other men. "Just snap them in the face," McGregor said, kicking again at the mirror.

"I don't know about them, I have to say," Devlin said.

"If I'm not going to wear 'em out of the store, I'm not getting 'em," he said. Then he nodded to himself. "I'm wearing'em out."

Devlin laughed and paid for the shoes: \$1,700. The leather boots McGregor had worn into the store went into the bag. The new sneakers went out into the snow and slush. They flashed like sirens.

Then a strange thing happened. A family with young daughters walked up to McGregor and asked for his picture. Then a construction worker broke from a road site and asked for one, too. Then a small crowd began to assemble in the cold on the cobblestones, inexplicably drawn to this man, to this machine, wearing shoes that somebody could wear only if he were somebody. McGregor was surrounded, just like that, made captive by his otherness.

He is aware of the irony. "If you're not in the humor of it, it can be heavy," he says, back in his corner of the bar. "People can become familiar with it, like they've known you all your life. That's weird for me. The reason I got into the game was so that people would leave me the fuck alone." He stops, his flashing black eyes looking at how many of the faces in this room are looking back at him. "It's backfired on me," he says.

And then McGregor is what he so rarely is: He is still, and he is quiet. You get the sense that he's recalculating, looking for different exits. He says he has not wondered once whether he might lose to Aldo—"If I entertain things, they tend to come true," he says—but sitting there, in the silence, he feels as though he has it in him, whatever the result, to disappear one day, maybe on a day not all that distant from today. He knows we'll swallow him alive if he stays; even he can't fight all of us off. The only way he'll have complete control is if he leaves. Maybe that's the future he's seen for himself all along, a great train robber's last big score before he makes good his final escape, vanishing into the jungle with his girl.

"We're the only animal that wakes up and doesn't stretch," he says, coming around.

"Look at your dog," Devlin says.

"Wake up and stretch," McGregor says. "Start there."

Start there and end up with everything you've ever wanted. To demonstrate, he announces that he's going back to his fancy hotel and falling into his cloud of a bed. It's three o'clock in the afternoon.

He won't sleep well. He hasn't worked out in two days, and he's edgy about it, as though he's taking his gifts for granted, as though he's forgotten those dark times when he felt trapped. He'll wake up at two in the morning and start prowling around his hotel room, padding across the thick carpets like a jewel thief, climbing the furniture, scaling the walls, walking upside down across the ceiling, learning how to move through the universe.

A few hours later, you'll wake up, the shadow of his arms still pressed around your neck. You'll get out of bed, and you'll stretch.

aquire

Times change. Technology changes. And the guidelines must be adjusted. So we're dusting off that venerable tome containing Esquire's Rules, cracking it open, and shoving in crucial new restrictions, proclamations, kernels, and nuggets. Especially nuggets.

Illustrations by Stuart Patience

wood. Get a cutting board.

103

Put some cured meat on it. Charcuterie. No. 849:

Two words: Crock-Pot. No. 850: Thighs. Always

Cooking

Rule No. 843: More

brown. No. 844: The

brussels sprouts haven't

845: Meat can be a con-

homemade pickles don't taste better. Your home-

made mozzarella, on the

Forgo the expensive char-

other hand... **No. 847**:

cuterie. No. 848: Char-

cuterie is cured meat on

changed. We have. **No.**

diment. No. 846: Your

thighs. No. 851: Sous vide is for having more

No. 852: Sous vide is not for talking about sous vide with your guests. No. 853: Pope's nose is the funniest part. No. 854:

You are not a cook until you've looked into the

time to talk to your guests.

eyes of a dead baby pig and thought, Can't wait! No. **855:** "Done" is a solipsism. A metaphysical construct. As such, use a thermome-

ter. No. 856: Browner!

HOW A MAN AGES:

2015 A man turning sixty-four in 2015 can just as easily look fifty-four as he can

seventy-four.







Hamlin, H

Harmon M





Hamill, M.

616: That age is usually thirty-seven.

2. On HBO Go, whenever

3. On HBO Go, whenever

my parents give me their

Who or what is an "Austin

1. The signature pile driver

of "Stone Cold" Steve Aus-

sandwich in the Texas state

3. A teen idol who refers to

his fans as "Mahomies." (4)

When you think of Jennifer

heart to the judge's

Lopez, you think...

table, (7)

Out of Sight. (14) 2. She just brings such

1. She peaked in

2. Only the most famous

I have time. (7)

password. (3)

Mahone"?

capital! (12)

tin. (8)

Aging

Rule No. 613: Some men airbrush

out wrinkles and blemishes from

sharing the photos with others.

digital photos of themselves before

Those men should stop doing that.

No. 614: Profile pictures should be

no more than eighteen months old.

No. 615: At a certain age, you just stop having time for this nonsense. No.

THE CULTURAL-AGE CALCULATOR

Your go-to adjective is:

- You see something that you believe is really good.
- 1. Terrific (12) 2. Sweet (10)
- 3. Awesome (7) 4. Boss (3) How frequently do you use

1. Snap-what? (14)

3. Juuuuuuuuust now. (3)

What's the first thing you

2. Nancy Reagan's "Just

3. I hear they're playing

2. Sometimes, but I prefer Instagram. Feels more permanent. (7)

say no." (8)

Bonnaroo. (4)

Snapchat?

think of when you hear the phrase "War on Drugs"? 1. The Nixon speech. (14)

3. You mean that How do you like your

old lady who used to look like Ariana Game of Thrones? 1. On TV, real time. (10) Grande? (1) AND YOUR CULTURAL AGE IS... 50 to 72: You're (culturally) old. You're mostly familiar with

stuff that's been around for a while. You like what you like.

25 to 49: You're (culturally) middle-aged. You make the

18 to 24: You're (culturally) young. There is no past, and

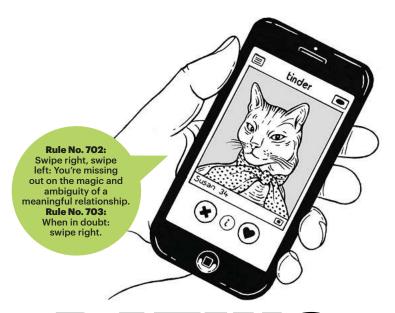
occasional effort to experience new things.

there is no future. There is only now.

Luddites never prosper. Adapt or perish. • Younger generations have been exposed to political correctness since birth. Push them to question authority, even if it makes them squeamish. • ACL surgery (and recovery) at fifty is not the same as it is at twenty-five. Recreate accordingly. • Age is an enemy in some ways

RULE NO. 617: YOU'RE GONNA WANNA AGE WELL.

but a friend in others, and people who rely on their minds should get better and smarter with age. • To a point. • You don't start understanding life well until you're forty. - MIKE SAGER



DATING

Rule No. 704: No good comes from staying Facebook friends with or following on Instagram someone who broke up with you. No. 705: One should text "lol" only if you laughed out loud so hard that you broke all your fingers, making it harder to type—an odd time for laughter, to be honest. No. 706: The worst that could happen is that she, in a fit of rage, uploads the photo to Facebook, on which she is friends with both your coworkers and your siblings, and has Photoshopped your face onto both of your testicles. No. 707: If she dances, you dance. No. 708: Any man who pranks his girlfriend for the sake of a YouTube video is not a man. No. 709: He is an auteur. No. 710: Of his shittiness. No. 711: Plans. Then, now, forever. Plans.

THEN	NOW
You call	You text
tinder: <i>n</i> . Small material suitable for starting a fire.	Tinder: <i>n</i> . A phone app suitable for hooking up.
BB: n. A small pellet for shooting cans and small animals.	bb: n. An abbreviation for "baby."
An expectation that the man pays.	A lowered expectation that the man pays.
The man pays.	The man pays.
Viral	"Viral"

DOING NOTHING

Rule No. 817: When doing something is actually doing nothing: tending your Instagram feed; organizing your iTunes library; masturbating. No. 818: When doing nothing is actually doing something: bingewatching a show by yourself; drinking on your couch; meditating.



Drinking

Rule No. 921: Huge difference between \$20 whiskey and \$40. Not a huge difference between \$40 and \$300.

No. 922: If it's aged long enough, every brown liquor tastes like honey. Tequila, bourbon, Scotch? Honey.

No. 923: The heavier the glass, the better the drink tastes.

No. 924: Related: Drinks taste horrible in mason jars.

No. 925: Cold night? Hot toddy.

No. 926: Warm night? Collins.

No. 927: Pleasant night? A skosh more viognier, thanks.

No. 928: Nine-percent IPA: Looks like a beer, tastes like a beer. Doesn't act like a beer.

No. 929: If you've been served by one skinny, tattooed, thickly mustachioed bartender, you've been served by them all.

No. 930: Unless that bartender is a woman. In which case, find out her story.

No. 931: "Public house"? Bar.

No. 932: "Tavern"? Bar.

No. 933: "Lounge"? Bar.

No. 934: "Speakeasy"? Anachronism.

No. 935: "Bar"? Beautiful.



TALK TO THE BARTENDER **ABOUT MATTERS OTHER** THAN DRINKING.

There was a time when people talked to bartenders about their problems, not their drinks. This was a better time. Understand that the bartender has spoken about all of the bottles and all of the drinks and all of the techniques with many customers before you. For the bartender, a discussion of beverages is Groundhog Day. Understand that drinks are better as conduits of conversation, not subjects of conversation. Understand that bitters are neither a conduit of conversation nor a valid subject of conversation. Even the cantaloupe bitters. By all means, strike up a conversation. Ask some questions. And the bartender might actually want to talk to you. About the game last night. About the tools in Washington. About you and what you think of as your problems. Or he might not. But he sure as hell doesn't want to talk to you about what you're drinking. Give the guy a break.

Rule No. 681: You still have to look behind you. And to the side. And in front. Especially while the car is in motion.

No. 682: Key word is assist.

No. 683: You don't need the moonroof.

No. 684: "Leather-wrapped." Yes.

"Leather-appointed." Nah.

blinker smooths over a multitude of sins. No. 686: The hands-free technology will be annoying to set up.

No. 687: Headlamp washers are an emblem. And not a good one.

No. 688: At the end of the day, it all comes down to midrange grunt.

2015 ESQUIRE DRIVER'S TEST

When a driver's arm is pointing straight out, he is...

- 1. Making a right turn. (-5)
- 2. Making a left turn. (5)
- **3.** Stopping. (-5)
- **4.** Probably just stretching or something. It's 2015. (15)

If you happen to miss your exit on a high-

way, you should...

- 1. Leave the highway at the next exit. (0)
- 2. Wait for Waze to update. (13)
- Choose the most appropriate way to acknowledge offense by another driver.
- 1. Honk (2) 2. Give 'em the finger. (1)

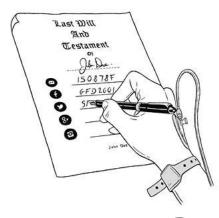
- 3. Stare at them in a menacing way. (0)
- 4. Post dash-cam video to YouTube. (8)

If there is a button on your console that you don't know the function of. you should...

- 1. Figure if you needed it, you'd know what it was. (-10)
- 2. Push it. (20)

KFY

More than 20 points: Congratulations! Here's your i8. O to 20: You pass. But you need to pick either the honk or the finger. Less than 0: Search "dash cam compilation." Learn.



Rule No. 574: Text your condolences but still call. (They won't pick up. Leave a message.) No. 575: Prior to departing this world, prepare a document with all the passwords for your online accounts and social networks so that your next of kin can dispense with them. No. 576: Because it's the thoughtful thing to do, that's why. **No. 577:** What you do is: Make a video for your kids while you still have your wits. Tell them you love them. Tell them what you need to tell them. Leave it for them to find after you die. No. 578: Try telling them those things before you die, should circumstances allow. No. 579: "What do I care, I'll be dead soon" only really means something after you turn seventy.



Eating Out

Sit up straight. Order for the lady. Keep your elbows off the table and your questions for the sommelier. Don't lick butter off the fish knife. The rules for eating out back in the day were strict but easy to remember. How now, though, are we supposed to act? If the table is a counter and the soup meant to be slurped? If the house has rules against taking pictures or a single unisex bathroom? This chaos needs to be tamed with rules, albeit ones less rigid than those of old. Here are some of ours.

—JOSH OZERSKY

Rule No. 638: Be cool. Don't lecture servers or make a point of announcing trophy allergies. Don't bellow, guffaw, high-five, or yell "Woo!" Don't ask waiters to take your picture, charge your phone, or box up your seven uneaten brussels sprouts. Don't be a fop, a mook, or a boor. Be cool.

No. 639: Tip a minimum of 20 percent in a ritzy restaurant and 25 percent in a casual one. Whether or not you had to wait. Whether or not you thought the service up to snuff. Whether or not you feel like it. These are hard times, and servers make less than the minimum wage. And guess what? Your precious tip often gets divided up among all the servers, and usually the food runners and the hostess and the busboys. Nobody is buying fur coats with your tip.

No. 640: Text as much as you want to. It doesn't bother anybody. But don't talk on the phone, ever, for any reason.

No. 641: Take as many pictures as you want (as long as you don't use the flash.) Part of the pleasure of dining out now is sharing it with people who aren't there,

whether they're your friends or your Instagram followers. Any chef who complains about having his food photographed is not only a bully but a dope: Those images ring out in a way no review ever could. Anyway, it's your food.

No. 642: Don't bring squalling infants or unruly tots into a restaurant. Unless it has multiple registers and a takeout lane.

No. 643: Split a check, by all means. But don't ask to have it divided in way that requires the use of Fourier series or irrational numbers.

No. 644: Don't eat lobsters over two pounds. The bigger they get, the worse they get. And never order lobster tails, which are almost always frozen.

No. 645: Never pay more than ten dollars for a cocktail that doesn't specify the spirit brands. Because bar gin is cheap.

No. 646: If you want a midcourse, order a midcourse. If you want the dishes as they come out, that's okay, too. If you want to order the steak first and the apps or salad afterward, that's the best idea of all.

No. 647: Order seafood in a seafood restaurant, and steak in a steakhouse, and vegetables in a farm-to-table place.

No. 648: Unless you are a jaded gastronome or a weirdo, avoid savory desserts like the plague they are.

RULE NO. 649: IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE HONEST AND HELPFUL ON YELP WITHOUT BEING AN ASSHOLE.

Instead of terrible, try unsatisfying.

Instead of incompetent, try slow.

Instead of idiot, try inattentive.

Instead of "It sucked," try "I wouldn't recommend it."



FIGHTING

Rule No. 891: You are allowed to "battle" only an army or cancer. There's no battling of other things. Not the flu. Not a crossword. Not a housefly. No. 892: When in person, urges to fight should be resisted, generally. When on social media, urges to fight should be resisted, totally. No. 893: If over the age of thirty you are involved in a "street fight," you need to assess your life's direction. No. 894: If over the age of forty you are involved in a "street fight," you need to get yourself to a hospital, because you don't look so good.



FLYING

Rule No. 953: Events that are inappropriate to live-tweet: Your delay waiting to board; your delay waiting to take off; your delay waiting to disembark; your delay at the baggage carousel; the mix-up at the car-rental place; the traffic on the way home from the airport; the accident causing the traffic jam: the accident that you've just caused because vou're tweeting and driving: vour own death. No. 954: There's a 94 percent chance that, were it not for the fact of in-flight movies, you might never have seen the work or known the charms of Rachel McAdams. Choose your in-flight viewing fare accordingly. No. 955: You are flying. Thousands of feet in the air. In a giant metal tube. Would it kill you to show a little wonder? No. 956: Accept the water. Refuse the blanket. No. **957:** The Gogo won't work. **No. 958:** There's a reason the flight was cheap.

REASONS FLYING USED TO BE BETTER:

The food, the drinks, the flight attendants, the legroom, the elegant and sophisticated ways that one's fellow passengers dressed, the whirlwind notion that one was going off—going away—toward something new and exotic and potentially life changing.

REASONS FLYING IS BETTER TODAY THAN IT USED TO BE:

No smoking.

THE MEDICINE CABINET B.S. METER



under-eye serum

firming cream

cotton balls

shave oil

aftershave

Q-tips

shaving cream

moisturizer

lip balm



FACIAL HAIR VISUAL RULE NO. 1,099



Always



Sometimes



Never

Grooming

Rule No. 745: In descending order of acceptable nomenclature: "gel," "hair stuff," "product," "goop," "father's little helper." **No. 746:** There is no shame in heroic hair-loss intervention. No. 747: Hair growth a man must always maintain: eyebrows, nose hair, ear hair, hair on his head (if applicable). No. 748: Hair growth a man must never maintain: arm. leg. knuckle, armpit.

No. 749: Everything else: negotiable. No. **750:** Never trust a man with perfectly maintained facial scruff. (See: Levine. Adam.) **No. 751**: "Makeup for men" isn't a thing. It has never been a thing. It will never be a thing. No. 752: In the formerly contentious and now fairly common realm of cosmetic procedures, lasers are your friends, scalpels are your enemies, and syringes are the one-night stands that you will inevitably come to regret. **No. 753:** Look not to

Mumford and/or his

Sons for grooming tips.



Having Fun

Rule No. 585: If it's fast, it's fun. No. 586: If it's in the air, it's fun.

No. 587: If it's in the water, it's fun. **No. 588:** If it involves a dude in wraparound sunglasses and amiable demeanor whose sole job is to make sure you don't die, it's fun.

No. 589: If it involves being stuck by yourself on a hillside along a "mountain coaster" track because you didn't tell them your real weight, it is not fun.

No. 590: Binge-watching Netflix series does not a hobby make.

No. 591: When all hope is lost: board

No. 592: Unless you're talking Parcheesi, which is basically Candy Land for adults. No. 593: If on your journey you encounter a hand-lettered sign for a zip line, keep going.

PLAYING: ADVISABLE OR INADVISABLE

Playing ball: Advisable

Playing devil's advocate: Advisable

Playing someone at his own game: Inadvisable

Playing dirty: Depends

Playing dumb: Advisable

Playing favorites: Inadvisable

Playing it safe: Inadvisable

Playing hard to get: Advisable

Playing hardball: Bet your ass

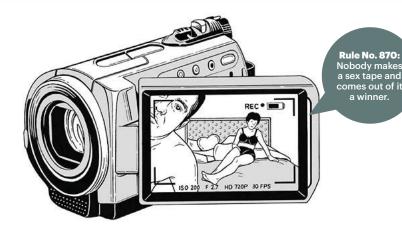
Playing God: Inadvisable

Playing fast and loose with our nation's security: Inadvisable

Playing it by ear: Advisable

Playing for keeps: Fuckin' A

Playing football: Inadvisable



HAVING SEX

Rule No. 871: The only guarantees in life: death, taxes, and the fact that every naked picture ever submitted via text, e-mail, or app will one day be available for public viewing. **No. 872:** That said: How Barack Obama's online, uh, viewing habits have never come to light remains the mystery of the digital age. **No. 873:** Two words behind every successful relationship: Clear History. No. 874: Nipple clamps remain a novelty best left to the pages of *Fifty Shades* of Grey. No. 875: That said: A little mutually agreed upon experimenting is never a bad thing.

PARENTING

Rule No. 795: Children's birthday parties are the best parties: low expectations, obvious conversation starters, guaranteed cake.

No. 796: Three words: *peanut-free facility*.

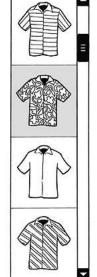
No. 797: Ask not whether your children will be tattooed but which tattoos will be on your children.

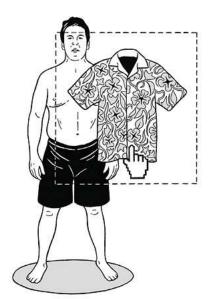
No. 798: Really, it's not that hard.

NOT A BIG DEAL	KIND OF A BIG DEAL
In ascending order of fraught	
Yell	Scream
Spill	Tear
Marker on the wall	Marker on the duvet
Pot	Heroin
Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood	Dinosaur Train
"I hate you"	"Die"
"Desiree"	"Destinee"
Aloof	Indifferent

Rule No. 1,055: Some companies may be tempted to offer an online feature that allows men to upload photos of themselves for the purpose of trying on items in a digital dressing room before purchasing said items. Those

companies should know those features will not work.





Shopping

WORTH
IT OR NOT
WORTH IT?
CUSTOMCLOTHING
EDITION

Jeans? Not worth it.



Shirt? Worth it.

Sneakers? Not worth it.



Dress shoes? Worth it.

Suit?
Depends. If you have the money (typically mid-four-figures) and the time (multiple fittings over many weeks) to get fitted for a custom suit: by all means. If you have neither the time nor the resources: You'll be fine with off-the-rack.

Rule No. 1,056: Most fun new thing to shop for: a car. Least fun new thing to shop for: a cell phone. **No. 1,057:** Amazon Prime is worth every penny. No. 1,058: Things a man should not buy online: fishing rods, bedsheets, plants, jeans. No. 1,059: Things a man should buy online: everything else, assuming a decent return policy. No. 1,060: You did check the return policy, right? No. 1,061: When ordering a custom shirt online, the more measurements you are asked to enter, the worse the resulting shirt will fit. No. 1,062: Things cashiers should stop asking: whether we want to save 10 percent by applying for a credit card today; whether we are "in their system"; whether anybody helped us today.

No. 1,063: No matter one's context or intended keeping-it-realness, answering that last question with "the black guy" is at best insensitive and at worst racist.

RULE NO. 1,064: eBAY CAN DO WONDERS FOR YOUR WARDROBE. IF YOU KNOW HOW.

I like random old stuff. "Old, odd things" someone once told me. And just as I used to trawl junk shops of London for weird stuff to decorate my apartment, I now do it from the comfort of my own desktop, to decorate me. I've bought all manner of accessories, from vintage Persol shades to ancient ties. I don't buy shoes or, for the most part, clothing unless I really know what I'm getting fitwise. Really old clothes tend to be tiny. Recutting old suits is a mug's game and it rarely works out. There also lingers the uncomfortable feeling of wearing someone else's clothes, "dead man's underpants" it used to be called amongst thriftstore trawlers. So a general and practical rule is the further it was worn from someone else's skin the better. Generally therefore it's accessories that are the best finds, because they either don't have to fit-like bags and umbrellas—or have a relatively simple kind of fitting-like hats or gloves. It helps, too, if it's something that has been made well, made repeatedly, and in great quantities for a long, long time (like certain bits of military clothing), which means there's a relatively regular supply on eBay. As with any kind of shopping, the more you know the better. The more specific you can be (down to a model name), the more likely you are to find a winner. - NICK SULLIVAN



TALK

Rule No. 833: In ascending order of aggravation: extravagant use of the French language (je ne sais quoi, whatever du jour); extravagant use of pop-culture references ("Not that there's anything wrong with that"); extravagant use of abbreviations (obvs, totes, abbreves).

A GUIDE TO USEFUL **PRONUNCIATION**

GIF Giff (Jiff? Please.)
MGMT Em-Gee-Em-Tee
SiaSee-ah
Sous videSue veed
UberOoh-ber
AmalAh-mahl
BoehnerBay-ner
Bezos Bay-zohs
Angela Merkel An-guh-la Mur-kul
Jonathan IveJon-a-than Eye-vuh
Brunello Cucinelli
Brew-nell-oh Cooch-in-elly
P.S.: It's still Porsh-ah.

RULE NO. 834: SKYPE IS AS INTI-MATE AS BEING FACE-TO-FACE.

From Cal Fussman, our chief What I've Learned interviewer: I learned to interview when I traveled around the world for ten years without a home and struck up conversations with people on trains. For some reason, people have a hard time believing how much I love interviewing through Skype. The fact is Skype puts me closer to my subject than real life does. Right now my eyes are less than twenty-four inches from my computer screen. That means when his or her face appears, it will be roughly twenty-four inches away from mine. That's a lot closer than we would normally be in real space. Skype approximates the distance of the people I sat next to on those trains.

Plus, I know I'm going to be comfortable sitting in my desk chair. If I'm meeting somebody in his or her office, I might be seated on a couch that makes me crane my neck for an hour or puts me in a position that makes it difficult for me to focus on my subject. What's more, the person I'm talking with doesn't have to worry about making sure I'm comfortable in his home or office-I might be three thousand miles away. And when they join me, they will be in a seat that they've already determined to be the most comfortable for them, too.



TEXTING

Rule No. 981: It is not rude for one to ask to be removed from a group text that one is no longer involved in. **No. 982:** It is, however. rude to ask to be removed from a group text with your family members. No. 983: Especially when planning a funeral. No. 984: When sent alone, this is the most disturbing

emoii.

No. 985: Your moral stance on the racial makeup of emojis is misplaced if you have not acted upon a similar stance about the racial diversity of television and children's-book characters. No. 986: The proper response to "duck you" is "goose you." **No. 987:** At this pint, you can no longer blame autocorrect. **No. 988:** Life is too short to question another man's time-saving use of *u* instead of you. No. 989: Really, though: u? No. 990: She's going to check your message history.

RULE NO. 991 IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE TO WRITE A GOOD TEXT MESSAGE.

Done well—which is to say sparingly and muscularlytexting expands influence, legitimizes reach, renders painful distances meaningless, with smallish intimate comforts. A good text, a welltimed text, a text that expresses some bullet of revelation, some reminder of love, some thoughtful association or ballbusting paraphrase of what we agree on reconnects us when that is all we ever wanted-connection-in the midst of the chattering, indifferent cloud of humanity. In an airport, in a restroom, in a lobby, we crouch. A good text demands a kind of dimensionless sympathy, the ability to picture another person's day so wholly as to understand what they need to know, what will make them laugh, what will jog them to soldier on, or remember, in some dark moment in a parking lot or a waiting room or a lonely bed. We do our best to say it. Yes, it is small. But we are large. And it's possible at least that we will thumb out our best self, end up sending it to someone who really matters. -TOM CHIARELLA



Working

Rule No. 863: You look 12 percent more important wearing a hands-free headset.

No. 864: But only when standing.

No. 865: You do not have to respond to any e-mail sent after the end of work hours until the next workday morning because you are a human being with a soul.

No. 866: Always accept the former intern's LinkedIn request—especially from the one with the serial-killer haircut. (She can't hurt you there.)

No. 867: No, instant-messaging does not look like working.

No. 868: But e-mailing friends and dates from your work account does.

No. 869: An open-office floor plan is a revolutionary way to ensure that employees wear headphones and work silently all day.

WHEN DEALING WITH YOUNGER EMPLOYEES, REMEMBER...

> They are not the worst generation.

- ➤ Look, that one might be mailing it in. But they are not all mailing it in.
- ➤ Things weren't different back then.
- They are incompetent because of their inexperience, not because of any sort of generational deficiency.
 - ➤ Two words: hormone surge.
- ➤ Let most of the impertinence slide. ➤ Empathy.

WHEN DEALING WITH OLDER EMPLOYEES, REMEMBER...

- ➤ They are not the worst generation.
- ➤ Look, that one might be mailing it in. But they are not all mailing it in.
- ➤ They leave early mostly because they have become efficient.
 - > Also, they have children.
- ➤ And children are more important than work. You'll see.
 - ➤ Correction: Children are as important as work.
 - Burdens accumulate.Empathy.



Working Out Rule No. 1,084: There is no better way to embarrass a man than to uncover and reveal the contents of his "Gym" playlist. No. 1,085: "Walking on Sunshine," huh? No. 1,086: Nobody cares how many steps you've taken today. No. 1,087: Other things nobody cares about: your WOD at your local CrossFit box, your BMI, your 10K splits, how *real* and *authentic* your disease-ridden gym is, what everyone else could be doing better at the gym. No. 1,088: Any workout that allows you to read a book or complete a puzzle on your iPad while said workout is occurring is not actually a workout. 12



Most of September 17, 2012, has evaporated from my mind. I still have a few memories. I have the way the surgeon's voice shook. I remember my wife calling my name while she was still under sedation. And I have an image of the hospital floor, up close. I remember white tile and a hope: Maybe I will never have to get up. Maybe they will just let me die here. ¶ Nicole was thirty-four, and the doctor had been direct: "It's everywhere," he said. "Like somebody dipped a paintbrush in cancer and flicked it around her abdomen." I staggered down a hallway and then collapsed. I remember the tile, close to my face, and then watching it retreat as my best friend picked me up from the floor. His name is Dane Faucheux,

HIS WIFE WAS JUST THIRTY-FOUR. THEY HAD TWO LITTLE GIRLS. THE CANCER WAS EVERYWHERE,
AND THE PARTS OF DYING THAT NOBODY TALKS ABOUT WERE ABOUT TO START. HIS BEST FRIEND CAME
TO HELP OUT FOR A COUPLE WEEKS. AND HE NEVER LEFT.

BY MATTHEW TEAGUE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAYMON GARDNER

and I remember noting, even in the midst of a mental fugue: Dane's a lot stronger than I realized.

I was in shock and stayed there a long time. We don't tell each other the truth about dying, as a people. Not real dying.

Real dying, regular and mundane dying, is so hard and so ugly that it becomes the worst thing of all: It's grotesque. It's undignified. No one ever told me the truth about it, not once. When it happened to my beloved, I lost my footing in more than one way. The tiled floor of life-morals, ethics, even laws-became a shifting and relative thing. I smuggled drugs. Lied. Hid money from the IRS.

I think I've hung on to the sensation of the hospital floor and being lifted away from it because it captures everything that followed

in the next two years. The shock of mortality. One man's collapse. And another man's refusal to let it happen.

ANE DECIDED TO MOVE in around Christmas 2013, on the night our dog died. Almost all of that year is lost to me. Nicole had ovarian cancer, which had metastasized to her stomach, and she endured a series of physical insults that, taken individually, would have been shattering; a single trip to the chemo ward, watching what looked like antifreeze flow into her veins while the nurses offered me cheese crackers, would have changed my life forever. Taken together, though, the surgeries and chemicals all form a smear that can't be taken apart and examined.

I do have a few recollections from that year, and Dane appears in each. For instance, when Nicole started finding hair on her pillow, I braced for her agony, because she was so young and so beautiful. But she asked me to meet her in the living room with a towel, scissors, and my beard trimmer.

She dragged a chair into the middle of the room and pulled her hair-long and dark and cascading-into a ponytail. "Go ahead," she said.

I sawed at it with the scissors until it came free in my hand. She looked up with wet eyes and smiled.

"I might as well rock this," she said. "Give me a Mohawk."

Afterward, we stepped into a bathroom so that she could look in a mirror. She was Creek Indian, and I had never seen her cheekbones so proud, her eyes so defiant.

I sent a photo of her to Dane, and a few minutes later he sent one back. He had carved a Mohawk of his own to match hers.

Nicole laughed. We had met Dane fifteen years earlier, when we all lived in New Orleans and they were in college together. Men trailed Nicole everywhere; in grocery stores men would follow her from produce to dairy and out into the parking lot. When she smiled, men imagined she needed them, and she smiled a lot. So I had developed a pitying skepticism of other men's motivations. But even when Dane didn't know I was watching, he averted his gaze from her body, and he accepted her smile as nothing more than a small gift. He offered us his friendship with such humility, such deference to our marriage, that I trusted him from the beginning. I'm not sure Nicole ever forgave us for both being men, because over the years it allowed me to grow close to him in a way she never could.

His expressions of affection were, for her, tiny victories. So

when she held up the photo of him with a Mohawk and laughed-"Look! Ha ha!"-I knew she meant it in the most competitive, gloating way possible.

In a season of butchery and wreckage and defeat, she had triumphed. I asked Dane later why he had done it. He didn't understand the question. "It was more fun than me just shaving my head bald," he said. It had never occurred to him to do nothing.

Later that year, I remember him standing sentry at the hospital. He had driven from New Orleans—we were living in a small town called Fairhope, Alabama-to stand guard for hours in the hallway outside Nicole's room so that she could sleep. One afternoon, a group of church ladies arrived. There is no force under heaven

> as mighty as a band of middle-aged Baptist ladies, and from inside the room we could hear Dane wage a battle of kind intentions.

> "They are resting right now," he said. "I'm so sorry."

> "Well, we came by to pray for them," one of the ladies said.

> "Yes, ma'am," he said. "But I feel pretty sure God can hear you out here in the hall."

We spent that Christmas season in the hospital. Friends came and decorated the room, and our two little girls curled up against Nicole in her hospital bed while she read "'Twas the Night Before Christmas." We all tried to ignore the clear tube pumping feces up from her bowels and out her nose.

Dane had come to visit after Thanksgiving and never ended up returning home. He burned through his weeks of vacation time, visiting the hospital during the day and sleeping at our house each night.

The night after Christmas, our pug, Gracie, threw up something black and putrid on the floor at his feet. He put her in a basket with a blanket in his car and searched for an open animal clinic. When he found one, he explained our situation to the veterinarian, and after some testing she blurted, "I'm so sorry, but this dog has cancer and I think she's going to die. Actually, I know she is going to die." And then she burst into tears.

Dane called me. I sat in the blinking red and green lights of our hospital room, listened to the news, and offered, "Okay."

Gracie's death didn't move me. It annoyed me. She was forcing me to have a talk with my daughters that would link cancer and death, and I wasn't prepared yet.

Dane came to the hospital with a bottle of wine. We sat on the floor and drank amid the wrapping paper of the girls' Christmas

"I think maybe I should just move in with you guys," he said. "Just to help out for a couple of months."

That meant leaving his job, his city, his friends, his apartment, his life.

"Okay," I said.

E READIED OURSELVES FOR THE physical horrors of death. Nicole seemed especially practical about it. She told us, "Just don't let me stink."

She shed weight, but we expected that. Dane and I could hardly see it, because we never left her. When visitors came, though, we could see it reflected in their faces, or when her shirt slipped to the side, exposing her collarbone. It looked wrong, like something alien implanted under her skin.

The most obvious manifestation of her illness, aside from weight loss, were the wounds. After each surgery, her skin was slower to heal, and finally a surgeon asked me if I knew about wound-packing. "No," I said.

"You need to learn," he said.

Each night, Nicole would lie naked on the bed and, using tweezers, I would extract a piece of ribbon from the wounds in her abdomen, sometimes several feet long, which would uncoil in the air above her like a pus-covered tapeworm. Then I would repack new pieces of ribbon into the holes, folding them in, spiraling them inside her, while she wept and begged me to just skip it, please, this one time.

Please, Matt. Please.

Since we had met, when she was still a teenager, I had loved her with my whole self. Only now can I look back on the fullness of our affection; at the time I could see nothing but one wound at a time, a hole the size of a dime, into which I needed to pack a fistful of material. Love wasn't something I felt anymore. It was just something I did. When I finished, I would lie next to her and use sterile cotton balls to soak up her tears. When she finally slept, I would slip out of bed and go into our closet, the most isolated room in the house. Inside, I would wrap a blanket around my head, stuff it into my mouth, lie down and bury my head in a pile of dirty clothes, and scream.

Sometimes at night, Nicole would wake howling and sweating, with a twist in her bowels. I would call for Dane, waking him, and he would hold the back door open for me while I carried Nicole to the car. Then he would sit up with our girls until we came home. Sometimes hours later, sometimes weeks.

Eventually I started to notice something strange: little bits of half-digested food emerging from Nicole's wounds. I called her oncologist, who used a word I had never heard before: fistulas. When there's an infection or some other foreign thing in the body, the flesh works to eject it, forming tunnels to the surface. Her body no longer recognized food as useful and was now expelling it directly out the front of her abdomen, like a foreign substance.

Nicole tried to lift her head and look at her belly. "Does that smell like poop to you?"

"No, it's hard to..."

"Is there poop coming out my front? Tell me."

For months, we tried to catch it with everything from colostomy bags to special gauzes to cloth diapers, but the stomach acid would burn through any adhesive and eventually started eating her flesh. There was no stopping it. There were only more narcotics for the pain.

These physical horrors, though, were nothing compared to what would come.

I told our family counselor, Julia, I knew things would get worse. "If I have to put her in a backpack and carry her to the chemo ward, I'll do it if it means getting an extra day with her."

Julia is a kind woman, but honest. "Before this is over," she said, "you will long for it to end."

Never, I said.



"No one ever told me the truth about dying," says Teague. "Not once. When it happened to my beloved, I lost my footing in more than one way."

OR MONTHS AFTER DANE MOVED IN, NICOLE couldn't eat much, so I fed her intravenously. I had no medical training, but it didn't require a doctor; it just required someone sterile and awake.

It's difficult to appreciate the sterility of a hospital

or lab until you try to impose it at home. In the early months of 2014, Dane and I cleaned ceaselessly—the house, the children, me, the medical equipment, Nicole herself. Boiling, wiping, filtering. But human bodies defy sterility, with our holes and our sloughing and our fingernails and our wet places.

The machine that pumped the fluid into her veins would shriek any time it needed attention—if a tube kinked, or she rolled over on it, or it ran out of fluid, or any number of other possibilities occurred—which happened every few minutes. During those months, Nicole was drugged and mostly unconscious, and I lay awake listening to the IV pump. I turned its amber display to face the wall, but that didn't help; I lay there doing the math, calculating how many milliliters of fluid remained until she needed more. In those months, I may never have slept an unbroken hour.

One day Dane touched my arm and I cried out, unsure of who he was. "You need sleep," he said.

He started conspiring against me, or so I suspected. From outside the bedroom door, I would overhear him talking with



Nicole about my exhausted mental state, which seemed absurd considering her condition. He started calling Julia, the counselor, behind my back. And he was making some sort of secretive arrangements with my other friends.

One morning he sat down with me. "We are going away for a couple of days," he said. "You and me."

"What? No."

We would drive up to the foothills

of the Appalachians and spend a couple days hiking. Another friend of Nicole's had agreed to come sit with her, he said.

"No."

Julia felt it was for the best.

"No."

It wasn't for me, he said. It would make me a better caregiver for Nicole. "And for your girls," he said.

I conceded. We spent the next couple days in a national forest, walking endless trails, crossing streams, climbing rock formations, mile after mile after mile. At the end of one trail, we found a waterfall and sat in the cool pool at its base, looking up at the cataract pouring down. My body was useless; I could feel my equilibrium shifting left and right, as though I were still hiking. But in my physical depletion, I discovered what Dane had known all along: My mind felt sharper and was more hopeful than it had been in months.

After a few minutes, we noticed movement at the top of the waterfall. A half dozen college-aged women had climbed onto rocks jutting from the top of the falls, and while we watched they started taking off their clothes. I blinked at Dane and we both burst out laughing.

"Dude. What is happening?"

"Don't question this, Matt. You need this."

The girls started leaping from the rock into the deepest water at its base, and then climbing up and jumping again. They looked like angels, perpetually falling to earth. They seemed impossibly joyful and healthy, and we could hear them laughing above the sound of the water. Finally Dane said, "Let's do it!" and took off his shirt.

"I can't do that, man."

"Why?"

I had no answer and every answer. I was married. My wife was dying. I knew that every moment of enjoyment in this forest would cost me later in guilt. And unlike Dane, I had not worked out in ages. No one wanted to see that. Instead I said, "We don't know how deep the water is."

I watched Dane climb up and chat with the girls on their rocks, all hugging themselves against a cool wind. Nicole's illness had cost Dane; at thirty-six, he had given up a management position and a girlfriend back in New Orleans. She could not grasp his devotion to Nicole and me—it is ungraspable—and their relationship had come undone. From her perspective, he must have seemed disloyal. He moved to the edge of the rocks to jump, and I found myself on my feet, clapping and cheering and wishing the sun would stop setting, and these young women would never age or fall ill or die, and Dane could hang there in space for the rest of time, a portrait of readiness and compassion.

N

ICOLE RALLIED. SHE STARTED EATING again. She had slept through the months of IV feeding and woke up pleasantly surprised that she could now fit into smaller clothes than ever before. She started entertaining visitors. People would drop in to see her and she would sit up, beaming. Chat-

ting. Apologizing for the state of her dress, or the house, or her hair, which had started growing back. She would describe all the things she wanted to do, and people—wonderful, kind, well-intentioned people—would nod and encourage her and marvel at her bravery.

This happened again and again throughout 2014. She would disappear into herself, silent, sleeping, afloat on powerful drugs, and then she would awaken with a new item to cross off her list: She wanted to visit New York one last time. She wanted to be the grand marshal of a Mardi Gras parade. She wanted to jump into the downtown fountain with all our friends. We did it all. What her life lacked in length, it made up for in height.

Each time she went down, doctors and nurses offered dire timelines. Months to live. Weeks. Even days. Each time, she rose again. It was magnificent to behold. It also came with a hidden price.

Each time Nicole faded, Dane took over many domestic duties—washing clothes, cleaning, shopping, cooking. I took over the rest. I woke and dressed and fed the girls, Molly and Evangeline, who were ten and seven. I helped them with their homework. I scheduled dosages, ordered supplies, checked the mail, paid the bills. I juggled money because nobody would die if we didn't pay our taxes, so the hospitals and surgeons came first.

During those times, Nicole was adrift on an opiate sea. We kept so much liquid morphine in the house that the doctors warned us about burglars. Then she graduated to Dilaudid, which is seven times stronger than morphine and ran on a continuous pump around the clock, alongside a terrifyingly powerful drug called fentanyl. These potions interrupted the signals between her mind and body, along with everything else in the physical world; her hallucinations disturbed Dane and me and would have terrified the girls. So we had to start keeping them away from her.

One night, she called to me and said she needed help to the bathroom. I tried to help her sit up, but she said, "No, I'm a Barbie doll. I can only move one limb at a time." So I lifted her head and then her back, straightened her head, moved one leg off the bed and then the other, finally standing her up. I moved her left foot, then her right foot, and so on until we had completed the task. To this day, her lead nurse, a woman named Faith, saves a photo of one of Nicole's Dilaudid pumps, which she shows to other nurses. That one pump recorded more than twenty thousand

When she would emerge into one of her better periods, she would awaken, aghast at the way I was running the house. One morning, she staggered into the kitchen, shocking us all, and announced that she planned to make eggs for the girls. Where had I hidden the spatula? Why was there so little milk in the refrigerator? Was it spoiled? It didn't taste right. Nothing tasted right. "How am I supposed to leave in peace?" she asked me. "I can't die like this."

milligrams poured into Nicole. "That's more Dilaudid than I and

all the nurses I work with have ever given," she said. "Combined."

With each decline and rise, she became more manic. One morning early last summer, I found her standing over the stove with the gas wide open while she tried to teach Molly how to light it. She couldn't remember how. I moved to switch off the gas and Nicole glared. She was unrecognizable with hatred.

Molly saw it and winced.

"It's not your fault, baby," Nicole told her, leading her away. "It's not your fault. Daddy needs to fix the stove."

There was nothing I could say. Her impending death stripped our relationship of every external measure of fairness. I could offer no arguments; I could not say "That's dangerous" or "Please don't use the girls against me."

I could appeal to nothing, because nothing trumps dying.



Far left, Nicole with Evangeline and Molly, days before her death last September. What her life lacked in length, it made up for in height. She had photo shoots done at her most beautiful so that her daughters could remember her that way. She danced with all her friends in the fountain downtown, cheered on the Jumbotron at an Alabama game. And through it all, Dane was there. When her hair started to fall out and she opted for a Mohawk, Dane immediately joined her. Below, Dane and the author, Fairhope, Alabama, in March.





denigrated. Each night, though, I lay down beside her, she would tear into me for hours, propelled by anger and fear and Dilaudid.

I started avoiding bedtime. I see now that, after fifteen years of marriage, this was my first step down a path that diverged from hers: hers toward death, mine toward a life afterward.

Dane and I stayed up late watching television every night. Without understanding why, we both became obsessed with zombie shows and movies. We spent every night—every night for an entire summer—watching the living dead shuffling eternally into frame just before being dispatched to the afterlife by some hero.

Afterward, we would sit in the dark for hours, sometimes in silence, but usually discussing the day's interactions with Nicole. I confessed to him one night that a dark fantasy had flickered through my mind earlier involving a spoon and mayonnaise.

He laughed. Nothing tasted right to Nicole anymore except mayonnaise. She ate so much of it that when Dane and I went to the grocery store, we would buy two jars at a time. She had a jar-a-day habit. On this particular day, she had asked me to make her a turkey sandwich, which I did and then brought into the bedroom. She took one bite and handed it back.

"Less turkey, more mayo," she said.

I remade it, spooning on double the mayonnaise.

"No," she said again, disgusted. "More mayo."

I heaped the stuff on this time. Great mounds of it.

When I handed it to her, she shook her head. "So you're trying to starve me," she said. "I guess I'm not dying fast enough."

Since the day of her diagnosis, everything in my life had revolved around this frail figure before me. Decisions and depression. Hopes and heartbreak. And now, for a sliver of a second, I pictured myself prying open her mouth and [continued on page 130]

ECHNOLOGY STARTED TO LOOM OVER OUR lives in a new way.

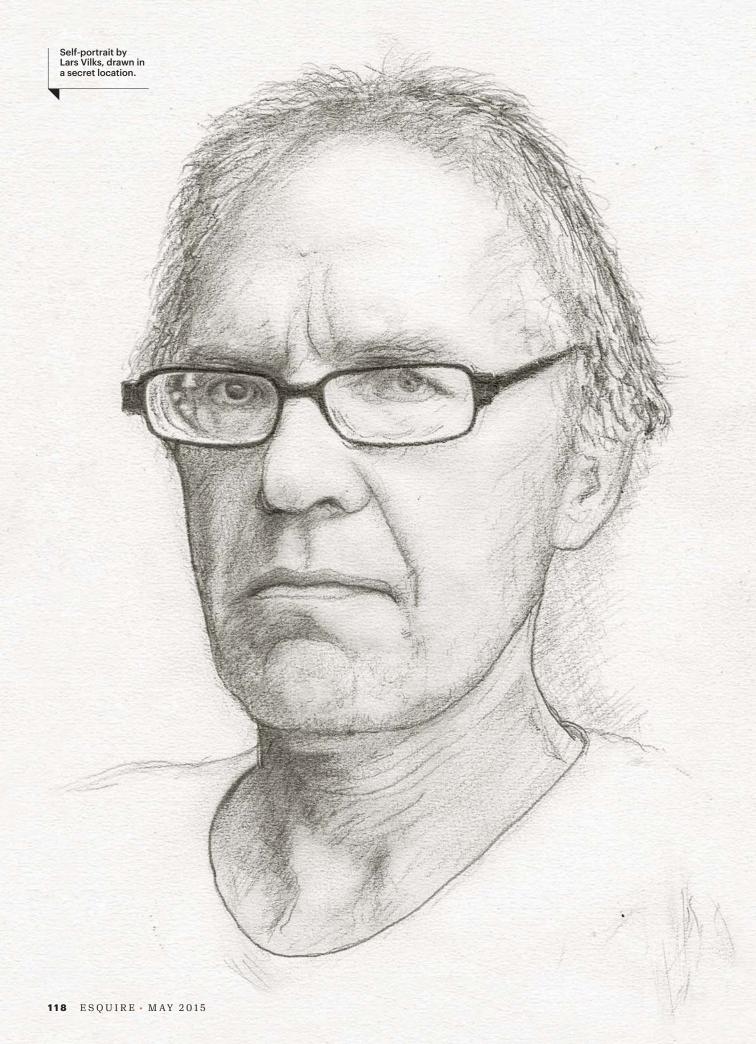
Dane continually found packages arriving on our front porch—packages of the most mundane items, like toilet paper or school notebooks—and assumed I was ordering them. Then medical supplies started to arrive. And clothing. Food. We discovered that Nicole was secretly ordering things online, clinging to her role as shopper.

"I am still a valid person," she seethed when I asked her about the packages. "I'm still part of this house."

I let it carry on a long time, in part because she couldn't keep track of her phone. She would call Dane and me to her bedside, enraged, to accuse us of stealing her phone as it sat on the pillow beside her head. Finally, when she tried to send money to someone in Iraq, I changed our accounts without telling her.

I found myself locked in a battle against a swelling horde of electronic opponents. When I discouraged Nicole from something—when I took away her car keys, or access to our accounts, or certain visiting hours—she would go to online cancer forums and write posts about my choices. Those forums are populated by people in similar awful situations who go online to hear yes in a world that is suddenly telling them no, and these people—this faceless mass of online handles—always told Nicole to keep fighting, that she could beat this, to just ignore my negativity.

Death is an invisible thing that can't be cursed at, or ignored, or



LARSVILKS

ARTIST, TARGET, 68, IN HIDING | INTERVIEWED BY CAL FUSSMAN ON MARCH 6, 2015

- > It's good to know what value you have as a human being.
- **I was in Germany,** guiding a big exhibition, when a phone call came, saying: "We have bad news for you. There is a fatwa on your head: \$100,000 for killing you and \$50,000 extra if they butcher you like a lamb."
- > I didn't know how it worked. I was thinking: Will the murderers come within five minutes? Running at me from all directions? I found out that it was more of a proposal: If there's someone with a good knife at home, why don't you make a jihad?
- > The best thing for a work of art is argumentation.
- > We had this movement in 2006 in Sweden that is not understandable from the outside. People started to make dogs—home-made dogs of wood and metal—and they put them out in traffic roundabouts anonymously, at night. The next day, there'd be these homemade dogs in different colors on these roundabouts all across Sweden, and everybody loved it. It was kind of a folk movement. Traffic-roundabout dogs. At that time, there was an exhibition called *Dog in Art*. In Sweden, we love dogs, so when you have a dog exhibit, everything is very nice. But in the Middle East, dogs can be seen as unclean because of religious dogma. I wanted to remind people of that. That's when I came upon the combination and drew the Prophet as a roundabout dog, a positive dog.
- > I had drawn Muhammad earlier, walking in Copenhagen with Hans Christian Andersen after visiting the Carlsberg Brewery. It was kind of a friendly gesture, quite funny. Yeah, you can see the Prophet has probably tasted a few beers. It was two symbols of culture—Danish culture and Islamic culture—meeting in Copenhagen. There were no reactions to it, so at that point I was convinced there's no problem dealing with the Prophet.
- > I never thought the roundabout dog would have more than a local interest. When you exhibit, it's a very limited audience.
- ➤ **The response started** like how it started for Salman Rushdie. The media asked Muslims: "Have you read the book?" No. "But the book says this and this—are you insulted?" Extremely. Then the media wrote a judgment: "Muslims are extremely upset."
- > It started to spread, and more Muslims were suddenly insulted. There were demonstrations in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The president of Iran at the time, Ahmadinejad, said the Jews were behind it. That's how it turned south on me.
- **People don't want solutions.** They want simple solutions. They don't want answers. They want simple answers. People don't put the time into analyzing. They want to take a stand, to say "I have an opinion." They want to say "I know what this is about. Lars Vilks, he just wants attention. He's one of these Muslim hate-speech guys. Probably a racist. I wouldn't call it art."
- **Everything I've done** after the dog has no importance.
- > Then you had these guys who were hungry to be terrorists but were not professionals. They tried to burn down my house, which

is not wood but concrete; so they poured gas and nothing happened. Then they tried to crash a window and start a fire inside, but they got the petrol all over themselves and suddenly they were burning—they panic, run away, and forget their driver's license outside my house. So it's an easy job for the police.

- > I started to sleep with an ax next to me. Journalists were storming my house, taking pictures. There was nothing dramatic to show them, so I thought, *How could I get some action in here?* And after all, if someone tries to break into my house, I have the ax.
- ▶ I was at home when I heard about the *Charlie Hebdo* killings. It was terrible. *Charlie Hebdo* had won a prize in Copenhagen. The Lars Vilks Committee had given it the Golden Dog. I met with [editor] Gerard Biard, and we had a nice evening afterward. So I had a connection. I had a strong reaction to what happened and the level of security was heightened. I had to leave my home and go into hiding.
- **> The Copenhagen drama** was actually taken from a Hollywood film. The lonely guy with a full-metal jacket coming forward and shooting. Security shoots back and an innocent person is killed. We know the story. The story is already written.
- > I cannot feel guilt over it because it's absurd. You can't say that a man who is so angry that he kills an innocent person because you made a drawing means you are to blame because you made the drawing.
- > We must defend freedom of speech, because now everyone is becoming very afraid. Will I be the next victim if I have something in this direction published?
- > There's some sort of hope in this. Maybe we can have a more balanced discussion, because now people understand that it's serious business. You can't show respect for people who are mass-murdering.
- ➤ Of course, I'd like to live to a hundred. I'm a soccer player and still getting better....!

Decades before becoming the subject of at least two murder plots for his drawing series depicting Muhammad as a dog, Vilks provoked the Swedish government by creating two large sculptures in a nature reserve. (He also drew Jesus as a pedophile in the wake of the Catholic Church scandal.) He's now on an Al Qaeda hit list; Swedish police protect him. Three weeks before this interview, the Lars Vilks Committee hosted a debate about art, blasphemy, and the Charlie Hebdo killings at a Copenhagen café. The café was attacked, and then a synagogue. Five police officers were injured, and a filmmaker and a guard died. Police pursued the gunman and killed him in a shoot-out.





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Two-button linen jacket (\$1,495) and linen trousers (\$395) by Ralph Lauren Black Label; printed-denim shirt (\$716) by Etro; suede double-monk-straps (\$140) by Banana Republic.

Esquire Style Two-button cotton-and-linen denim jacket (\$2,250) and cotton-and-linen denim trousers (\$690) by Gucci; linen shirt (\$545) by Brunello Cucinelli. **124** ESQUIRE • MAY 2015











Two-button wool-linen-and-silk-blend suit (\$4,070) and calfskin belt (\$475) by Brunello Cucinelli; cotton shirt (\$295) by Massimo Alba; suede double-monk-straps (\$140) by Banana Republic.

Viv

[continued from page 95] many rules. Once again, the program has to learn to analyze the context, taught by the input of thousands or millions of private developers pursuing the fulfillment of their own desires.

Another group of coders is teaching Viv how to supervise the approval process for new members, which Gabel happily describes as a "very nontraditional thing." The smart machine will actually be testing human contributions to the smart machine.

At his workstation, Cheyer is going through bugs, tweaking to make sure things are centered on the screen and there's no unintentional scrolling. Then he switches to playing the role of the flower-shop owner, teaching Viv to handle customers. No, there's no need to suppress funeral corsages. Yes, ask me whether it's a birthday or a wedding.

At his station, Brigham isn't happy with the way that the groups of flower products interact. He wants Theadora's Polka Dot Basket to show up in the centerpiece group more elegantly, with cleaner links to alternatives or a purchase decision. It's another design thing, final touches.

Across the room, Marco Iacono is working on the graphic design, tweaking the appearance for different devices. "This is the iPhone 5—which, you can see, yeah, fits perfectly."

Midmorning, they all gather for a standup meeting, passing a Frisbee around to designate the speaker. "Yesterday I spent a lot of time talking about the developer experience," one says. "I completed the P1's on the automated testing stuff," says another. "I did some cleanup and bulletproofing for WineStein capsule," says a third.

Kittlaus makes a business announcement: "I'm working on getting \$12.5 million wired into our accounts by tomorrow."

The scientists tease him. "What are you gonna do tomorrow?"

"Yeah, how many more millions next week?"

They're all a bit on fire with the potential of it all. "This is the dream project," says Richard Schatzberger, who joined the graphic-design team several months ago. "The technology that these guys here have built is something so radically new and different—it's something new."

"Behind the scenes," as Levy puts it, with the low-key pride shared by everyone at Viv Labs, "there are some pretty nontrivial algorithms."

"It feels awesome," Iacono says. "It's a wild, wild place to be."

For example, lately he's been experimenting with other ways of interacting with Viv.

Other ways? Besides typing or talking? "Um, maybe."

Then he blurts it out: "Touching. We're kind of exploring the edges of possibilities." \bowtie

The Friend

[continued from page 117] pouring a whole jar of mayonnaise down her throat.

When visitors came, Nicole could draw herself up and present a model of grace and fearlessness—the same for online forums and Facebook. Those sentiments were true—she carried herself with courage, and love, and poise—but when we were alone, she cut me without mercy.

In just a few words, Dane saved me.

He said, "She lashes out at you because she knows you'll stay."

And when I would deny her yet another delirious fantasy—of going someplace exotic when the bathroom would forevermore be the extent of her travels—he had a simple clarity that I assumed I had lost for good.

"Just tell her yes," he said.

A sort of delirium set in.

Dane had lived with us for almost a year now, lived in the shadow of death, and he and I found ourselves cracking jokes so dark, so morbid, that they defied explanation.

We made a pact: If he married someday or if I remarried and one of our wives was diagnosed with cancer, the other would show up at the hospital and slip a knife between his ribs. A mercy killing. We cried laughing, imagining the puzzlement of witnesses on the scene: "This guy just walked in and stabbed him. And what's really weird? The dead guy told him 'thank you.'"

We told stories about how we would both be old men, drooling and incontinent, and Nicole would shuffle in to demand a mayonnaise sandwich.

We laughed at our inept drug smuggling. I had heard weed could help counter the nausea from chemo, but medical marijuana is illegal in Alabama. So some friends offered to get us some. I told them to just leave it in their mailbox, where I could pick it up. "Just make sure to pick it up before noon," my friend said. "That's when the mailman comes." The next morning, I found the brick of weed in the right spot, wrapped in clear plastic, and on top of it, the day's mail.

Later, when we had to take away Nicole's phone—probably the most difficult decision of the entire ordeal—she started leaving us venomous, drug-addled handwritten notes. They were heartbreaking. But her creativity and determination in delivering them took on an artistry. We couldn't figure out how she was doing it.

"I got this on my pillow," Dane said one night. A crayon scrawl.

I showed him mine, a loopy screed about needing her phone. "I found it in the bathroom," I told him, "stuck on the wall opposite the toilet, at eye level when sitting."

In our heartache and exhaustion, we both started to giggle. "You know what she's doing, right?" Dane said.

"What?"

"She's texting us."

It got to where I started hiding from Nicole,

unable to face the rage. Too cowardly to sit and bear it, I would curl in the fetal position on our porch swing, where she could not find me. Or I would retreat to one of the girls' bedrooms upstairs, where she could not follow. I stopped eating and drinking.

Dane appeared there one night with a plate of food and a bottle of water. He admonished me with profound compassion. "I'm going to let you stay like this for one more day," he said. "After that, you'll have to get up."

As he walked out the door, he stopped to complete his argument. "For your girls," he said.

Even in my spiral I could see that our daughters had fallen in love with Dane. They sensed in him a strength that I no longer had, and they confided in him.

Each night, he would sit alone on our porch after Nicole and I went to bed. He would read, or call his friends back in New Orleans, or count raccoons crossing under a streetlight. A few times Molly got up and went out to join him.

I watched them through a window. He would sit with her, rocking on the swing, and listen while she talked about bad dreams.

The dressing on Nicole's abdomen became a massive, complex thing that required specialist nurses to come in every couple days and assemble it as a team. Its purpose now was to keep her abdomen from coming apart altogether.

One day, immediately after the nurses left, Nicole started pulling apart the bandages. "I think I'd like to have myself a shower," she

I watched, speechless, as she pulled off the last of the gauze and made her way to the shower, dribbling stool and acid onto the floor as she walked. I just lay on the bed, unable to move.

A long while later she returned and lay beside me. She requested tape and gauze.

"Let me call the nurses," I said.

"No. I can do this myself."

As she unwound the tape, it stuck to her hands, to itself, to her belly. Her stomach belched up a geyser of yellow crap, which flowed down her sides onto the bed. Her hands stopped, and I looked up to her face. She had passed out.

I touched her cheek and her eyes fluttered open. She smiled. She seemed puzzled to find herself covered in hot excrement and tried with her bare hands to contain it. It smeared all over her torso, up her arms to her elbows, and all over the bed. I reached to help and she pushed me away.

Something in me broke. The remaining thread of the last fiber of the final cable holding me together just snapped, and I rolled off the bed. I didn't want her to see. I crawled into the bathroom and curled around the base of the toilet, shaking and weeping.

From the bedroom, I heard her call out, "Dane..." Her voice was diaphanous, like she was calling through silk. I heard Dane come to the door, and she told him I needed help.

She had called him for me.

Dane opened the bathroom door and I cried out, "It's just shit everywhere, Dane." With vast discretion, he didn't try to pick me up from the floor this time. He just closed the door.

The nurses came and replaced Nicole's dressing. I don't remember how long I lay in the bathroom, but the light through the windows had shifted when I emerged.

Later, Nicole's lead nurse, Faith, sat down with me. "I see it now," she said. "She needs antipsychotics."

Haldol was designed as an antischizophrenic drug in the 1950s, at the peak of the mental-institution boom in America. It's a knockout drug. "Hound dog," the nurses called it.

According to Alabama law, licensed practical nurses, who were now staying at the house and watching Nicole around the clock, were not allowed to administer it. Registered nurses could, but they could come by only once a day.

There was a loophole in the law, though, they said: Someone else could administer it.

So while the nurses watched and advised me, I started giving my wife the injections that would, in a sense, finish her life. She drifted away on Haldol, an ocean measured in milliliters, no longer calling for food or water, which meant the volcano of her stomach stopped erupting. Her face relaxed. Her jaw drooped.

Her breathing slowed, and over the next few days it grew louder—loud enough to hear throughout the house. It sounded like someone slowly dragging a cello bow across her vocal cords. I realized then that the last honest person to describe death may be whoever came up with "croaking."

The way dying looks, or so I expected, was like this: A small group of friends and family gather around the patient, watching as she draws and releases her final breath. People hold hands and exchange glances to acknowledge how profound the moment is just before a doctor checks for a pulse and announces, "It's done."

The way it actually happened was like this: There was medical equipment blocking the way to our bathroom, so on the morning of September 9, 2014, I went upstairs to shower. I had a head full of shampoo when I heard Dane call from the foot of the stairs. I couldn't make out what he said, so I rinsed off and stepped out of the shower. A few seconds later, as I tried to towel off, he called again: "Hurry."

I tried to pull jeans onto my wet legs as I stumbled down the stairs, and just before I made it to the bedroom I heard Nicole's rasping breath. I think I did, at least; I was trying to zip up my pants before entering the room, where Dane stood with two nurses. They stood looking at Nicole.

"What happened?" I said.

"That may have been the last one," Faith

said. "Maybe. They're coming slow."

Nicole's pulse had faded days ago, to the point where no one could feel it. So we stood watching her for a couple minutes. She simply didn't breathe again. No spiritual release. No change in complexion. No shift in facial features. She just stopped.

It was a routine death in every sense. It was ordinary. Common. The only remarkable element was Dane. I had married into this situation, but how had he gotten here? *Love* is not a big-enough word. He stood and faced the reality of death for my sake. He is my friend.

The months after Nicole died stretched and shrank and stretched again, like taffy.

Griefhollowed me out, and I expected that. But underneath it I also felt a deep sense of relief, and even joy. For the first time in two years, I felt hope. I kept that a secret, though. People would stop me on the street to express their sorrow, and I would find myself stooping to match their emotional tone. "Oh, yes, it is so difficult, but we will make it somehow."

The truth was that, after two years of suffering, Nicole finally felt no more pain. After two years of horror, the girls and I felt like we had escaped something. Molly told me that, for the first time in as long as she could remember, she didn't dread hearing me call from the foot of the stairs, because she knew I had no more bad news to deliver.

Dane helped the girls adjust to an endless life without their mother, but the days without Nicole were empty, and he wanted to find work. I told him there was no need. He could just live with us, and I would split my income with him. Forever if he wanted. We had survived an endless winter and entered into an existential springtime.

But Dane quietly descended into a depression of his own. He felt restless and started spending more time in his room. At one point, he visited a pet shop with a friend, and she alternated between picking up the puppies and kittens. "Don't you want to hold one?" she asked him.

"Nah," he said. He couldn't explain it, but he knew that if he held a small animal he would burst into tears.

In January of this year, four months after Nicole died, fourteen months after he abruptly left behind every single thing that makes up an adult life to put himself at the service of Nicole and me, he decided that he needed to move back to New Orleans and reclaim his own life.

In a most unexpected way, Dane's leaving hit me harder than Nicole's because I wasn't prepared for it. He didn't know how to tell me that he was leaving, so he just started packing up. He left one day when the girls were at school. On that day, he stopped as he climbed into his car. "I'll be back in a couple of weeks," he said. "It'll be weird, though, because you'll be married by then."

We both laughed. He pulled out of the driveway, and I just stood there in the yard for a long time, wondering what to do, my eyes all wet. Then, after a while, I turned and went back inside my empty house. 8



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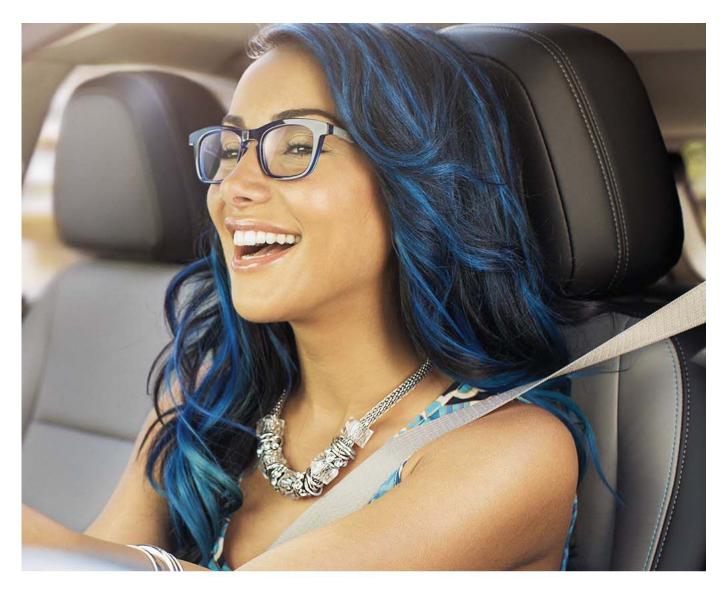
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